2021 PREVIEW IT'S GETTING BETTER! WELLER! FOO FIGHTERS! ST. VINCENT!

MOJO Magazine

40TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL!

JOHN LENNON 1940-1980 THE LONG GOODBYE

167 REVIEWS LEONARD COHEN, FRANK ZAPPA, SLEAFORD MODS, BOBBY WOMACK AND MORE

PINK FLOYD AT WAR!

NANCY SINATRA REBOOTED!

THE STONE ROSES RESURRECTED!

BLACK SABBATH TONY IOMMI GETS HEAVY

KING GIZZARD WIZARDS OF OZ

AND... THE MAN WHO WOULD BE **BOWIE!**

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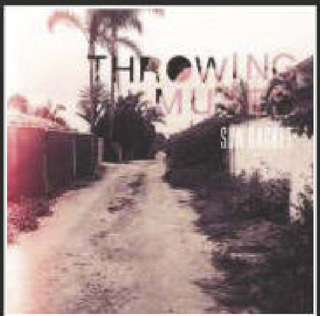
BY THE FIRE

THURSTON MOORE
BY THE FIRE
DAYDREAM LIBRARY
LP / CD



THROWING MUSES
SUN RACKET
FIRE RECORDS
LP / CD

PIGS PIGS
'VISCERALS'

PIGS PIGS PIGS PIGS PIGS PIGS PIGS
VISCERALS
ROCKET RECORDINGS
LP / CD

BLACK LIPS
SING IN A WORLD THAT'S FALLING APART
FIRE RECORDS
LP / CD

WIRE
MIND HIVE
PINK FLAG
LP / CD

BDRMM
BEDROOM
SONIC CATHEDRAL
LP / CD

I AM MORON
LOVELY EGGS

THE LOVELY EGGS
I AM MORON
EGG RECORDS
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BOB MOULD
BLUE HEARTS

BOB MOULD
BLUE HEARTS
MERGE RECORDS
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WAXAHATCHEE
SAINT CLOUD
MERGE RECORDS
LP / CD

ANDY BELL
THE VIEW FROM HALFWAY DOWN

ANDY BELL
THE VIEW FROM HALFWAY DOWN
SONIC CATHEDRAL
LP / CD

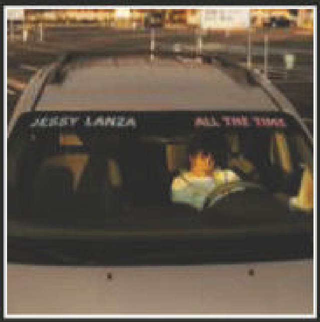
WIRE
10.20
PINK FLAG
LP / CD

GENERATIONS
Will Butler

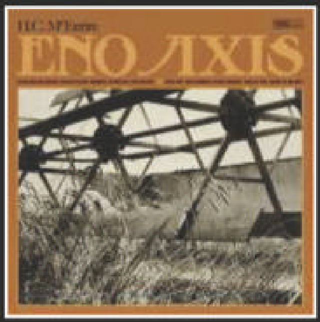
WILL BUTLER
GENERATIONS
MERGE RECORDS
LP / CD

Peel Dream Magazine

PEEL DREAM MAGAZINE
AGITPROP ALTERNA
TOUGH LOVE
LP / CD

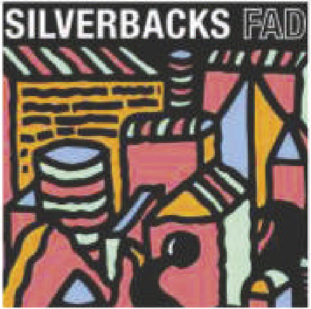


JESSY LANZA
ALL THE TIME
HYPERDUB
LP / CD



H.C. MCENTIRE
ENO AXIS
MERGE RECORDS
LP / CD

PHARAOH OVERLORD
6
ROCKET RECORDINGS
LP / CD



SILVERBACKS
FAD
CENTRAL TONES
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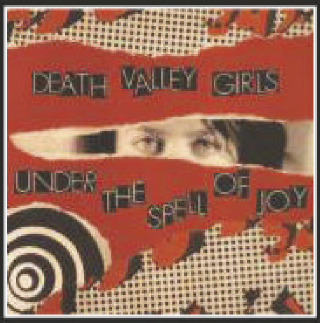

DEATH VALLEY GIRLS
UNDER THE SPELL OF JOY
SUICIDE SQUEEZE RECORDS
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GWENIFER RAYMOND
STRANGE LIGHT OVER GARTH MOUNTAIN
TOMPKINS SQUARE
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GIRLS IN SYNTHESIS
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CARGO RECORDS

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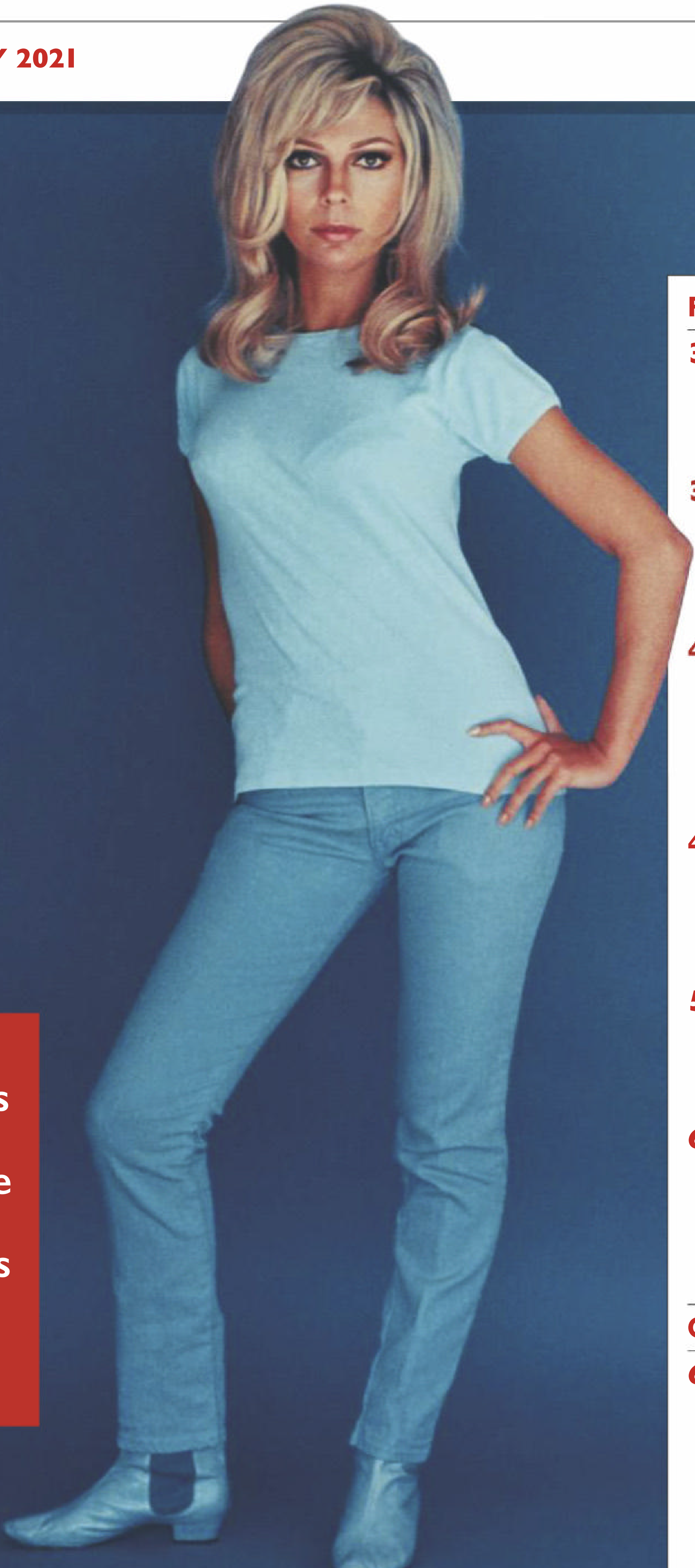

Ron Joy ©Boots Enterprises, Inc.

> “My dad’s example was so graphic. The absolute devotion to his work was catching.”
>
> **NANCY SINATRA ON FRANK SINATRA, P36**

FEATURES

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36 NANCY SINATRA From a fabled stable came the personification of sassy mid-’60s sophisto-pop. “Everything was fresh,” she reminds Dave DiMartino. “Everything was approached from a new point of view.”

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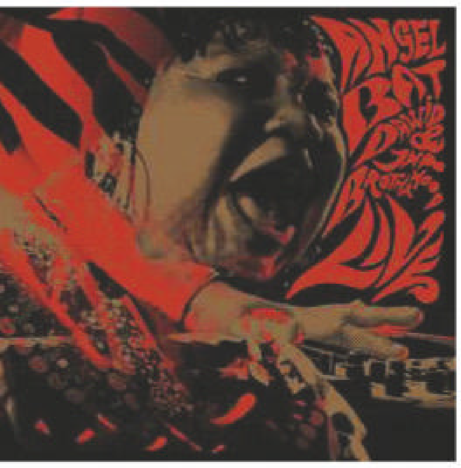
52 FLOYD WARS! 2020 saw hostilities resume between the big beasts of Pink Floyd past and present. But when did their beefs begin, what lies behind them, and why can’t they all just get along?

60 THE STONE ROSES In 1995, the implosion of Britain’s coolest band became public property, but *Second Coming* wasn’t even the end of it. As eyewitnesses recall: “It was a proper Spinal Tap moment.”

COVER STORY

64 JOHN LENNON Forty years since Lennon’s murder, John Harris revisits a world in mourning, while Klaus Voormann, Earl Slick and MOJO’s writers remember the times and the ways his greatness changed the world: “He was unique. He was a fucking anomaly.”

Johnny Flynn, Confidential, p22.



Bill Evans
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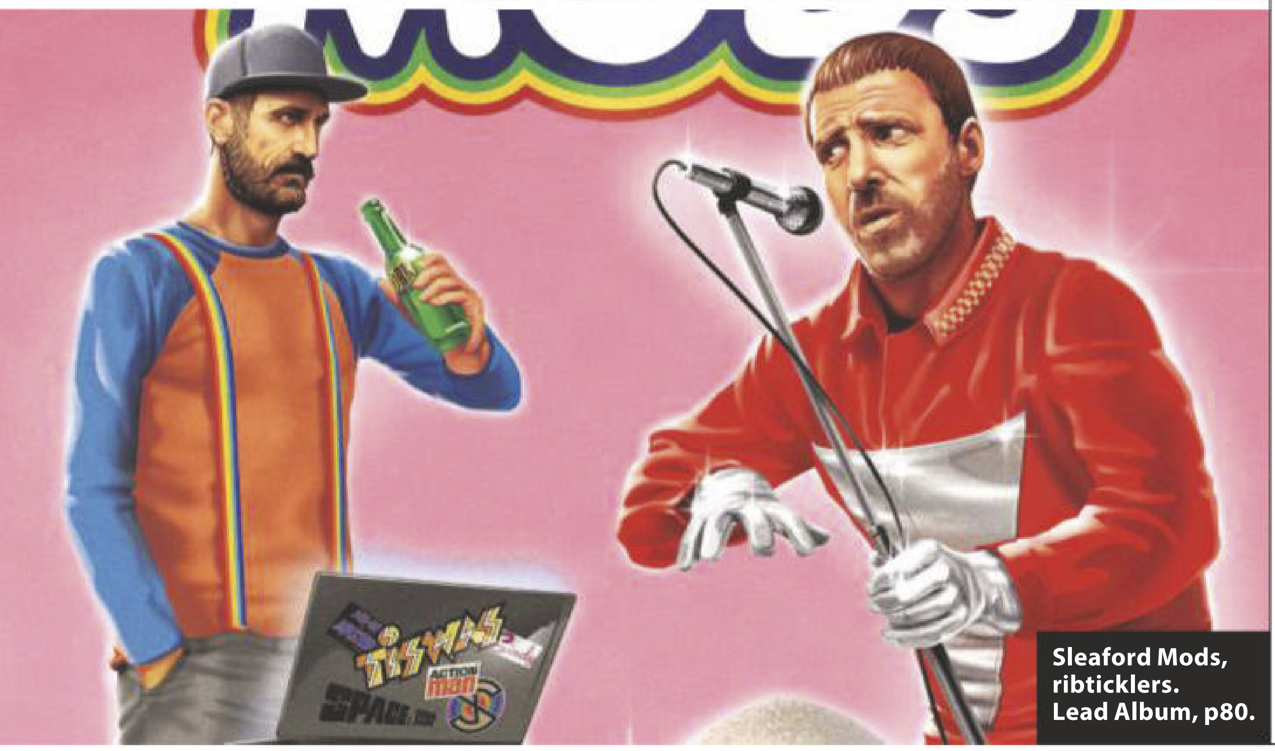
M. Ward: thinking of spring, New Albums, p82.



Sleaford Mods, ribticklers. Lead Album, p80.

MOJO

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102 **REAL GONE** Ken Hensley, Baron Wolman, Billy Joe Shaver, Rance Allen, and more, we salute you.

112 **ASK FRED** An '80s sound on a '50s record?! What gives?

114 **HELLO GOODBYE** They snatched victory from defeat. It couldn't last. Stephen Street's 'hi' and 'bye' with Morrissey.

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16 **DAVE GROHL** The world stood still, and all his plans were put on hold. Now the Foo Fighter is looking forward to a new record, and gets emotional at the very thought of making a noise in a room full of those about to rock.

20 **RICHARD THOMPSON** Lots of musicians write books. But when Thompson does it, clued-up reader takes note. Here he previews his frank and cathartic memoir Beeswing.

22 **JOHNNY FLYNN** How do you go about portraying Bowie on screen? Fresh from 1971 US tour film Stardust, the former Sussex Wit talks contact lenses and contact highs.

24 **THE SHADOWS OF KNIGHT** They were the Midwest garage punk rowdies who kicked up a storm with their cover of Them's Gloria in 1966. Via splits, prison and ska-punk, the Cult Heroes are back, with some help from Little Steven.

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80 **NEW ALBUMS** Sleaford Mods serve up *Spare Ribs*; plus Steven Wilson, Avalanches, Aaron Frazer, Kiwi Jr and more.

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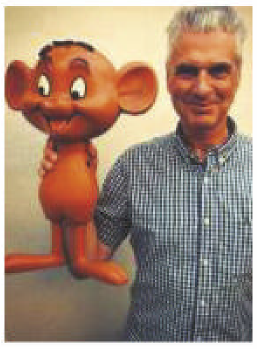
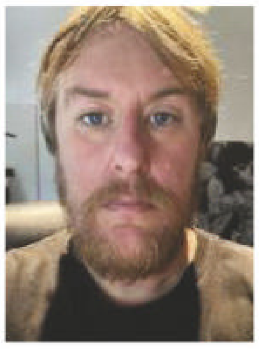


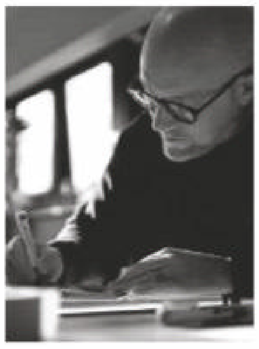
Jon Savage

A MOJO contributor since 1993, Jon is the author of This Searing Light: The Oral History Of Joy Division and the curator of *Do You Have The Force? (Jon Savage's Alternate History Of Electronica 1978-82)*, released by Caroline True Records on limited double vinyl. He revisits the golden age of synth music from page 46.



John Harris

John is a political(ish) columnist for The Guardian – but also a long-standing MOJO contributor and music writer, currently editing transcripts from The Beatles' Let It Be sessions into the book that will accompany Peter Jackson's Get Back movie. He writes about the aftermath of John Lennon's murder from page 64.



Sam Hadley

Sam has worked with clients all over the world on a huge variety of projects, from illustrating and designing film posters and packaging, to hand-painting murals. He illustrated this month's Lead Album, page 81. Follow him on Instagram @sam.hadley.illustration and check out more of his work at www.hadleyart.com

Sam Hadley, Holly Andres,

The KILLS

Little Bastards

B-sides and Rarities

Out Now

Domino

PSYCH OPS!

15 new garage rock nuggets

featuring **king gizzard & the lizard wizard, thee oh sees, white denim ty segall & mikal cronin, wooden shjips, sonic boom** and more!

1. hot snakes

I Need A Doctor

A ferocious and imaginative keeper of the garage rock faith, San Diego's John 'Speedo' Reis has cranked out underground hits for the past 30 years at the heart of Rocket From The Crypt, Drive Like Jehu, Pitchfork, The Night Marchers, Back Off Cupids, The Sultans and here with the superb Hot Snakes. I Need A Doctor comes from their 2018 comeback album, *Jericho Sirens*.

Composed by John Reis. Lyrics by Rick Froberg, Published by HOT SNAKES. ℗&©2018 Sub Pop Records. Taken from *Jericho Sirens*.

2. olivia jean

Rhinestone

Olivia Jean Markel first came to prominence a decade ago, moving from Detroit to Nashville to front The Black Belles, a girl group put together by Third Man supremo Jack White. Her solo career has sustained the vintage twang and amped up the goth glamour to hit zingy ramalams like Rhinestone, off 2019's self-produced *Night Owl*.

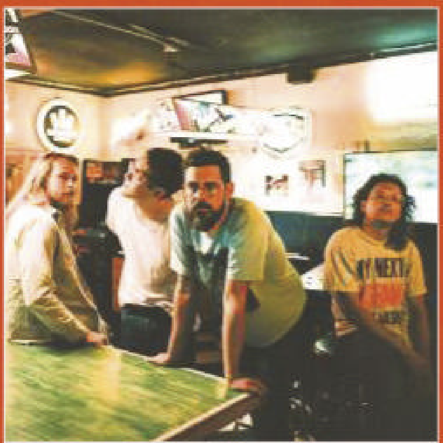
Written by Olivia Jean. Published by Olivia Jean Music (BMI). ℗&©Third Man Records, LLC. Taken from *Night Owl* (Third Man Records). www.thirdmanrecords.com

3. ty segall & mikal cronin

Take Up Thy Stethoscope And Walk

One from the early days (2010, to be precise) of the prodigious garage maven's career, in cahoots with his sometime bassist and notable solo artist Mikal Cronin. Here they trip out on Roger Waters and The Pink Floyd's *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn* clangfest: achin' heads guaranteed!

Written by Roger Waters. Published by SONY MUSIC ATV. ℗&©2010 In The Red Records. From *Reverse Shark Attack* (In The Red Records). https://intheredrecords.com/



4. white denim

Matter Of Matter

Full-tilt boogie *à la mode*, courtesy of James Petralli and his Austin compadres. Matter Of Matter comes from *World As A Waiting Room*, the tenth White Denim album, written, recorded and pressed in just 30 days at the start of spring lockdown.

Written by Petralli, Terebecki, Clifford, Hunter, Anderson, Salazar. Published by Bop English (ASCAP), Steve Terebecki (ASCAP), Songtrust (ASCAP/BMI) adm. Downtown Music Publishing/Songtrust. ℗&©2020 English Mallard Ltd. Taken from *World As A Waiting Room* (Radio Milk Records). www.whitedenimmusic.com/

9. wooden shjips

Golden Flower

Ripley Johnson, benign guitar god at the reverberant heart of Wooden Shjips, has hooked up a few times with Sonic Boom over the years (notably with one of his other projects, Moon Duo). Here, he and his fellow Shjips mingle Spacemen 3's dronerock with a lighter touch redolent of San Francisco's early psychedelic dancehalls.

Written by Johnson, Ahsanuddin, Jermier, Whalen. Published by Thrill Jockey Records. ℗&©Ripley Johnson. Taken from *V.* (Thrill Jockey Records). http://thrilljockey.com/

10. wand

Perfume

An epic surger from Cory Hanson and his Los Angeles cohorts, another project to emerge from the same energetic scene as Mikal Cronin and Ty Segall, whose bands Hanson has figured in. Don't be fooled by the false ending at 3:45; the second half of Perfume – from the 2019 EP of the same name – is *Psych Ops'* peak virtuoso freak-out.

Written by Wand. Published by Domino Publishing Company Limited. ℗&©2019 Drag City, Inc. Taken from the mini-album *Perfume*. www.dragcity.com

11. death valley girls

Hypnagogia

More garage rock invocations from LA, this time from the Death Valley Girls. Hypnagogia opens their recent third album, *Under The Spell Of Joy*, a swirling take on psych that adds freeform sax and conveys the spirit of an occult Ronettes.

Written by Bloomgarden, Schemel. Published by Bonnie Jill Bloomgarden (BMI) – (50%) and Laurence Schemel (ASCAP) – (50%) both publishers adm. Third Side Music ℗&©2020 Death Valley Girls. Taken from *Under The Spell Of Joy* (Suicide Squeeze Records). www.suicidesqueeze.net

12. david nance

This Side Of The Moon

From Nebraska, Nance has been a scene outlier these past few years, producing a wired, skeletal take on classic rock that feels at once rootsy and uncanny. This Side Of The Moon is located on *Staunch Honey*, his fifth proper album after a wealth of early homebrewed work that included entire covers of Lou Reed's *Berlin* and *Beatles For Sale*.

Written by D. Nance. Published by David Nance ℗&©2020 Trouble In Mind Records and David Nance. Taken from *Staunch Honey* (Trouble In Mind Records). http://troubleinmindrecs.com/

Will Sprott, Anna Nance, Ian Witchell, Amdophoto, Sofia Ahsanuddin, David Fearn, Pooneh Ghana, Devendra Banhart, Taralyn Thomas,

WHEN LENNY KAYE COMPILED THE ORIGINAL *NUGGETS* album in 1972, much of the exhilarating music it contained was only five or so years old. Nevertheless, his tone in the sleevenotes was as nostalgic as it was exuberant. "Whether you want to use [*Nuggets*] to remember that bittersweet moment when you first decided to let your hair grow/ take up a picket sign/wonder what a deadly toke would feel like," he wrote, "well, that's 'your trip'."

Some of the music on *Psych Ops*, the high-energy freakout CD that comes with this issue of MOJO, is a decade old, but still feels radically current. Some of it sounds like it could have been made by contemporaries of The Shadows Of Knight and The Pink Floyd, and captures that sense of rock'n'roll's primal impulses being intensified by new lysergic vibrations. All of it, though, testifies to the enduring potency of psychedelically tinged garage punk – an unruly cult sound that, thanks to the energies of Thee Oh Sees, King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard, Ty Segall, White Denim and many more here, is as big and exciting as it's ever been. There's no time, after all, like the right time…

MOJO
PSYCH OPS!
15 new garage rock nuggets
featuring
king gizzard & the lizard wizard
thee oh sees
white denim
ty segall & mikal cronin
wooden shjips
sonic boom
and more!

5. la luz

Cicada

More twang, this time from the LA girl gang led by sometime solo artist Shana Cleveland. The desert melodrama of Cicada can be found on La Luz's third LP, *Floating Features*, produced by Dan Auerbach of The Black Keys – no stranger to garage rock smarts himself, of course.

Composed by Shana Cleveland, Marian Li-Pino, Alice Sandahl, Lena Simon. Lyrics by Shana Cleveland. Publisher by PHANTOM PHEELINGS (ASCAP) / MARIAN LP MUSIC (BMI) / EERIE ORGAN (BMI) / LENA SIMON (BMI). ℗&©2018 Hardly Art, Taken from *Floating Features*.

6. king gizzard & the lizard wizard

Ontology

"They called me 'psychedelic'," Gizzard pivot Stu Mackenzie tells MOJO on page 42 this month, "so we made a spaghetti western album, to prove we could be anything we wanted." Australian breakout superstars of the scene: the Anatolian-tinged jam of Ontology comes from their sixteenth album in eight years, *K.G.*

Written by Stu Mackenzie. Published by Kobalt Music. ℗&©2020 KGLW

7. thee oh sees

Encrypted Bounce

Think King Gizzard are productive? Meet John Dwyer, linchpin of Thee Oh Sees and inexhaustible paterfamilias of the Cali garage rock scene. This ever-changing band currently trade as Osees and are proggier, for now, but Encrypted Bounce is sprung from 2014's *Drop*, with Barrettish acid whimsy welded to a Can-like rhythm throb.

Written by Dwyer. Published by Oneeyedfatgirl (ASCAP). ℗&©2014 Castle-Face Records. Taken from *Drop* (Castle Face Records). www.castlefacerecords.com

8. sonic boom

I Can See Light Bend

Peter 'Sonic Boom' Kember has seen a few garage rock revivals come and go, ever since he formed Spacemen 3 with Jason Pierce in the early '80s. Post-Spacemen work has mostly been under the Spectrum and E.A.R. brands, but this stroboscopic synth mantra is from 2020's *All Things Being Equal*, his first Sonic Boom album in 30 years.

Written by Kember. Published by Sonic Boom Publishing Designee. ℗&©Carpark Records 2020. Taken from *All Things Being Equal* (05/06/20 Carpark Records).

13. a. swayze and the ghosts

News

"Super-ironic punk is cheap, I don't see any longevity to it," Tasmania's Andrew Swayze told MOJO earlier in 2020. "We're not in this because it's a fashion thing – we have something to say." Hence the vigorous, withering News, from the band's fine debut LP *Paid Salvation*; garage rock with a political imperative.

Written by Hasler, Wipprecht, Blain, Simms. Published by Mushroom Music Publishing. Taken from the album *Paid Salvation* (Sunset Pig Records under exclusive licence to Ivy League Records). www.aswayzeandtheghosts.com/

14. tim presley's white fence

Neighborhood Light

Californian Presley's maverick career has encompassed a brief spell in The Fall (circa *Reformation Post TLC*), and as half of DRINKS with Cate Le Bon, plus an obligatory collab with Ty Segall. This decade he's concentrated on White Fence: a meticulously wayward project bent on pushing Syd Barrett's musical explorations into stranger terrain.

Written by Tim Presley. Published by Domino Publishing Company Limited. ℗&©2019 Drag City, Inc. Taken from *I Have To Feed Larry's Hawk*. www.dragcity.com

15. brigid dawson and the mothers network

Ballet Of Apes

British-born Dawson was a key member of Thee Oh Sees, on keyboards and backing vocals, but this title track from her 2020 solo album moves into a hypnotic new space: a sort of cosmic jazz-infused garage rock, carrying echoes of The Stooges and Pharoah Sanders.

Written by Dawson. Published by Barrowsongs (ASCAP) ℗&©2020 Castle-Face Records. Taken from *Ballet Of Apes* (Castle-Face Records). www.castlefacerecords.com

"I WANTED US TO SOUND LIKE A RECORD COLLECTION."

The wild trip of KING GIZZARD & THE LIZARD WIZARD begins on page 42.

CAT STEVENS
Yusuf

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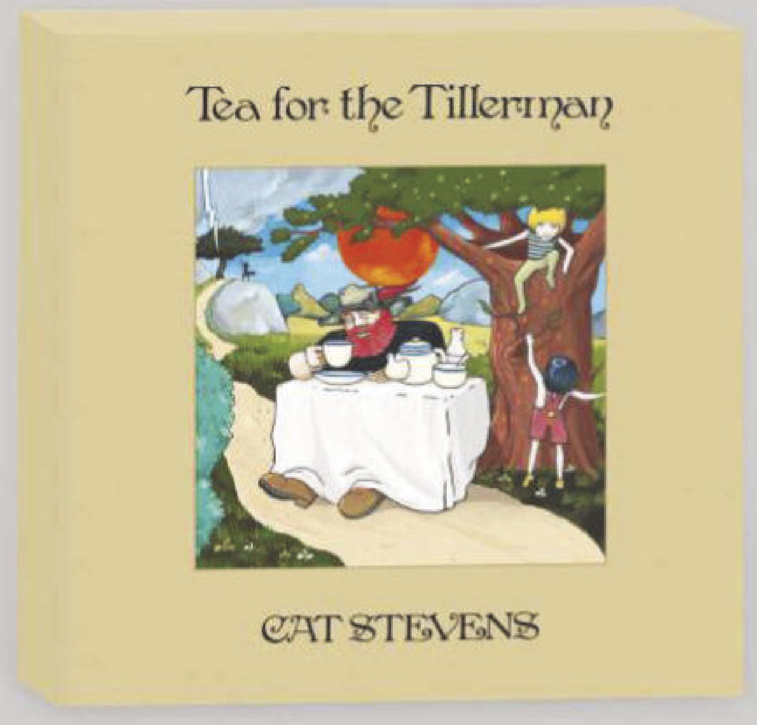
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Tori Amos

STILL EARTHQUAKING

What music are you currently grooving to?

I'm listening to the **Beatles** catalogue again. I found George Martin's With A Little Help From My Friends: The Making Of Sgt. Pepper, which details how the songs were recorded. I'm on that part where they did two very different takes of Strawberry Fields, and how they were resolving it.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

I don't know if there's such a thing, but one I adore is *Blue* by **Joni Mitchell**.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

To tell you the truth I can't remember. My mother, a minister's wife, had an amazing record collection. When my father would go to church, she would take off her pinny and play **Billie Holiday**, **Fats Waller**, **Sinatra**… my brother who was almost 10 years older would bring home **The Doors** and things and play it for me. And when my father came home, they'd have me play this devil's music in, like, a Debussy style, so he had no idea. Record buying became a thing later. I remember buying the **Led Zeppelin** box set when I left home. I love that.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

I always wanted to be a guitar player, but I didn't have it.

What do you sing in the shower?

I don't. I like to hear the sound of the rain!

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

Well, right now, [daughter] Tash and I are watching Strictly, and that live band are swinging. It's not easy doing all these styles. I can't dance though.

And your Sunday morning record?

Soul of the mid to late '60s. The sound of Detroit, **Marvin Gaye** and **Aretha**. Play that and the sun is out.

Tori's Christmastide EP is out on Universal.

ALL BACK TO MY PLACE

THE STARS REVEAL THE SONIC DELIGHTS GUARANTEED TO GET THEM GOING…

James Yorkston

LUST FOR FIFE

What music are you currently grooving to?

New albums from **David A Jaycock** and **Seamus Fogarty**; older favourites like **Bess Cronin**, **Orchestra Baobab**, **Oumou Sangaré**… The **Undermedvetenheten** album on Lost Map has been played a lot – a great accompaniment to a game of chess.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

It'd have to be *Fifth Column* by **U.N.P.O.C.** It's kind of a cross between *Pet Sounds and Doolittle*, but it was recorded in a wardrobe, so sounds a little lo-fi… What is it? English language, guitar-driven pop music, with plenty of harmonies. It came out nearly 20 years ago and I'm still awaiting the follow-up.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

I was given a record voucher by my Auntie Faith, and I used it to buy *20 Rock & Roll Greatest Hits* from Woolworths, in St Andrews. I guess I was seven or eight. I still have it and still play it, although it's pretty scratched up.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

I've never had that desire. I'd love to be able to sing well, though. I'd also love to have had **Séamus Ennis**'s skills with the Uilleann pipes.

What do you sing in the shower?

If I have a tour coming up, I run through my old songs. If not, I'll try and remember some of the longer traditional songs. Currently on Arthur McBride – **Paul Brady**'s version, of course.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

Michael Hurley – *Long Journey*. He's been putting out consistently great albums since the late '60's. *Long Journey* is probably his most polished. It's fairly up-beat, curious, weird alt-country from long before the term was coined.

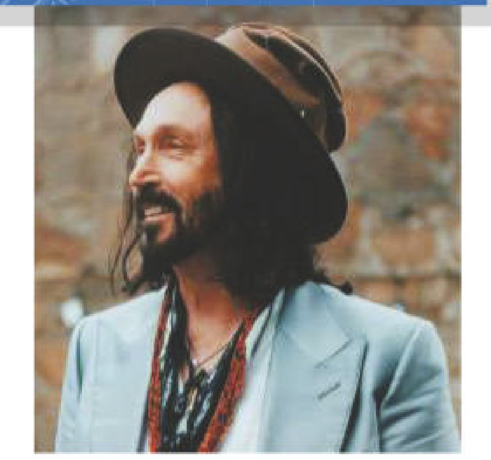
And your Sunday morning record?

Emahoy Tsegué-Maryam Guèbrou – *Spielt Eigene Kompositionen*. A friend of mine gave me a copy 15 years ago, and it's one of those records that has just stuck with me. I adore her compositions and her playing.

Enjoy James Yorkston's online club night at taesup.co.uk

Mike Campbell

HEARTBREAKERS, FLEETWOOD MAC, DON HENLEY GUITAR



What music are you currently grooving to?

A lot of music from the '60s, because that was my time. Right now, I'm on a **Jimi Hendrix** kick. There can be a month where all I want to hear is **The Beatles**, or **The Rolling Stones**, **The Kinks**, **The Animals**, **The Beach Boys**. I try to listen to new music too, but there's not much I like. But **Starcrawler** are a pretty good little rock band.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

Exile On Main St. by The Rolling Stones. There is a live-ness about it, and a jammy quality. When it first came out, I didn't have a record player, and a rumour went around that so-and-so owned it, so we all went to their house to hear it from start to finish. It was a religious experience.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

The Beatles single She Loves You, from the local dime store in Jacksonville [Florida]. They sold hygiene products and stuff, with a little shelf in the corner of records. I had to save up for a week.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

This week, Hendrix.

What do you sing in the shower?

Old blues like **Howlin' Wolf** or **Muddy Waters**. There's a nice echo in there.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

Exile On Main St. Abbey Road too, possibly because I listened to it on acid once, and it sounded incredible! If I can pick one of ours, when I hear the first **Heartbreakers** album, I can still feel the kinetic energy and the exuberance of the band discovering itself.

And your Sunday morning record?

The Beatles' Here Comes The Sun is a beautiful way to wake up, and a beautiful way to start side two of *Abbey Road*. And you can't go wrong with some blues with your first cup of coffee.

The Dirty Knobs' Wreckless Abandon is out now on BMG.

> "It was a religious experience."
>
> **MIKE CAMPBELL HEARS THE STONES' *EXILE ON MAIN ST.***

Nicole Otero, Ren Rox, Sheva Kafai

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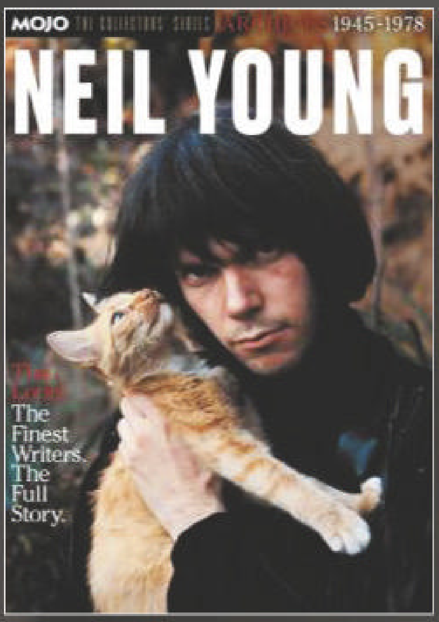
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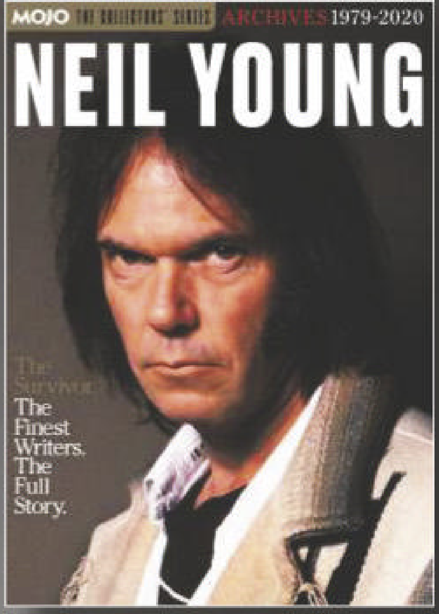
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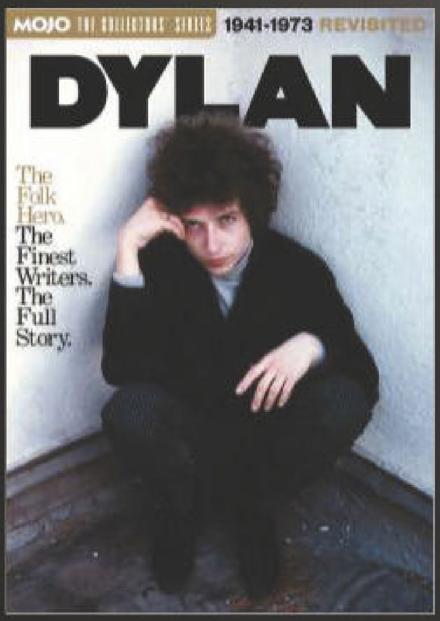
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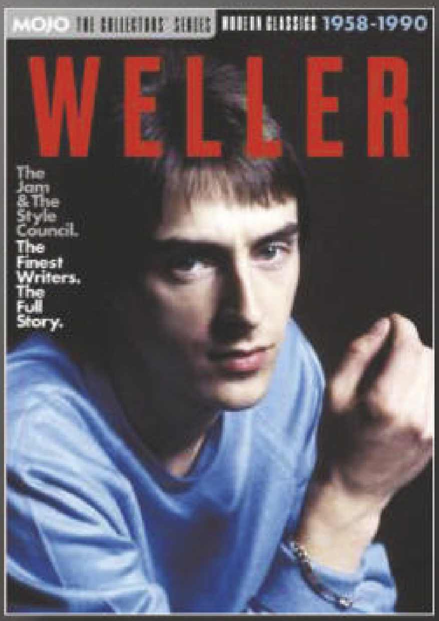
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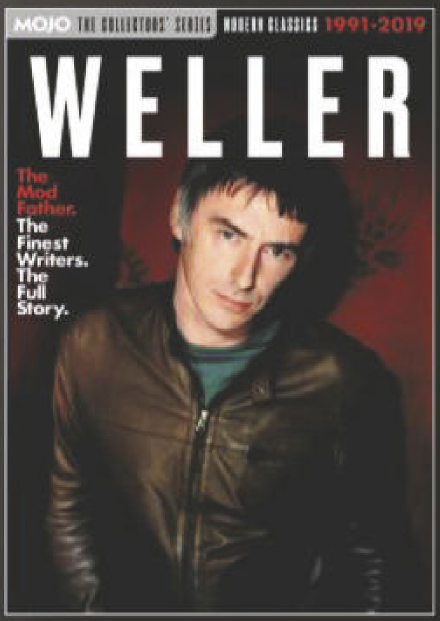
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Theories, rants, etc.

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IMAGINE A WORLD WHERE JOHN LENNON never existed: it isn't easy, is it? MOJO, for a start, probably wouldn't be here, not just because we'd have been short of one or two cover stories over the years, but because Lennon and The Beatles changed the way people thought and wrote about music and culture. The Beatles didn't invent a grown-up discourse about pop, but their very existence made it a necessity. Under their influence, rock'n'roll was revealed as both ubiquitous, and profound; a three-minute thrill, and a subject worthy of lifelong obsession.

This month, MOJO charts the multitude of ways John Lennon changed our world, and remembers how that world changed again in the wake of December 8, 1980. The morning after, I woke up to the news of Lennon's death with a fever, and spent the day off school, lying in bed listening to Radio 1. I don't recall much analysis or reflection, or even album tracks, just an unquenchable flow of hits. That evening, as John Harris notes in our cover story, BBC1 screened Help! It was a strange, introverted day, not the sort you'd typically remember 40 years down the line. But of course I do, vividly. What about you?

JOHN MULVEY, EDITOR

Isn't that sickening when that happens to a chap?

Having twigged MOJO 326's Theories, Rants, Etc... film link as The Third Man – thankfully no inclusion of the "cuckoo clock" line, too obvious – I was sent back to a dusty old C90 bootleg I picked up at a Cambridge record fair back in the '80s, upon which The Beatles are covering Anton Karas's earworm theme to said film [AKA 'The Harry Lime Theme']. One thing led to another, and the rest of the evening was spent down a bootleg rabbit hole, unearthing all manner of nonsense. It brought back the subversive thrill of acquiring bootlegs, samizdat the record companies felt couldn't be let loose on the public. Now that any note a band set to tape can be found on YouTube or deluxe reissues, how about an article on bootlegs? It would bring back that exhilaration of simultaneously unearthing a rare archaeological find and taking part in something a bit dodgy.

Chris Rodden, Norwich

...The last time I got this correct and you published my e-mail, the answer was Citizen Kane, starring Joseph Cotten. Blow me, I've only gone and got it again. The answer is probably one of the best British movies of all time, namely, The Third Man. Not only does it star Orson Welles, the main character is Holly Martins, played by, you've guessed it, Joseph Cotten.

Nick, via e-mail

I can't march properly on my own

OK, so you worship Bob Dylan. I get that *Rough And Rowdy Ways* is his first album of new music in a long, long time [MOJO 326]. I can even appreciate that his lyrics contain deep meanings that need multiple listens to extract their full value. But, boy, is it dull! It just drones on and on and on. Across the entire album there is less joyous, stimulating music than the first five seconds of Like A Rolling Stone or Hurricane, to name just two of his many, many classic songs. Album of the year for Dylan completists only, I'm afraid.

Jerry Green, via e-mail

I'm going to explode, but I won't

Not a single mention in your Best Of 2020 lists [MOJO 326] for Phil May's brilliant, poignant swan song, The Pretty Things' *Bare As Bone, Bright As Blood*? Don't bring me down, MOJO! I was

➢

already heartbroken at his passing. Album of the year, for this listener.

Don Share, Chicago

…Without sounding like someone from across the pond (who in no way would I wish to be associated with) I demand a recount. I listened to *Song To A Refugee* by Diana Jones. I'd never even heard of her prior to this, and wow! It's heartbreaking, beautiful, tragic, poignant, and touching in equal measure. Just as importantly, it's relevant to what's happening in the world right now. Before hearing this, as I mentioned in a previous letter to you, my top three albums of the year were *The Unraveling*, *Good Souls Better Angels* and *Rough And Rowdy Ways*. But with apologies to the Drive-By Truckers, Lucinda Williams and Bob, Diana Jones's is the finest new album I've heard this year. It's certainly far better than the lacklustre and underwhelming *Letter To You*.

David Tags Taylor, Thurnscoe, South Yorkshire

Where's your tin hat gone?

I have been a subscriber to your magazine for many years now and have noticed that within your album reviews very few albums are ever awarded a five-star rating, and rightly so. However, one this year was *Songs Of An Unknown Tongue* by Zara McFarlane in your Sept 2020 issue. Imagine my surprise, then, when I opened MOJO 326 and looked through the albums of the year to find that this album was not included anywhere within your Top 75. Surely this makes a mockery of your star rating system, as only about three or four albums a year ever achieve five stars – one would expect these to be considered worthy of inclusion within your albums of the year.

Can you explain the above conundrum to me – surely the album cannot go from five stars to none within two months? I cannot see the point of a star rating system for albums if it is not to show what is considered the best albums issued over the course of the year. I will be interested to see your comments.

Bob Finch, via e-mail

Hi Bob, the star ratings are the subjective choice of the individual writers who review the albums. Our albums of the year chart, though, was compiled from the votes of 55 writers – and only one of them voted for Zara McFarlane's album, which left *Songs Of An Unknown Tongue*, unfortunately, back in equal 301st place. I appreciate it looks a bit odd, but hopefully this clears up the mystery. – *JM*

I've never found anything worth keeping

Of course the first thing I read in MOJO 326 was The Best Of 2020. It was quickly followed by The Best Thing I've Heard All Year. Now we're talking. Get a load of passionate musicians to recommend stuff, exactly what a mag should be doing in these tough times. I settled down to search out these nuggets. Great start with Fontaines D.C.… whoah, how had I missed Sorry this year? Then, turning the page – is that it? Four pages! Where's the rest? Come on, this is gold dust! Sort it out next month before I wear out my exclamation mark key!

Zabadak Heda, via e-mail

Must have left it sticking in the horse, sir!

As a reader of MOJO since the start, I've finally been forced to put pen to paper (so to speak). I know, in these Trumped-up times of Brexit and pandemic, anything can happen. But what's going on in How To Buy Leonard Cohen [MOJO 326] with the absence of *New Skin For The Old Ceremony*, which includes Who By Fire, Lover Lover Lover, Chelsea Hotel etc… Still, you got the album of the year right.

Steve Garrett, Shillington

Dig in, then break through with sword and lance

Knowing your keenness on accuracy there is a typo in Geoff Brown's Spencer Davis obituary [MOJO 326]: Nigel Olsson should be described as drummer and Dee Murray as bassist. Sorry to be so pernickety.

Pete Wilcox, via e-mail

How dare you disfigure government property?

Two things from the Beatles article [MOJO 323] need correction. First, speaking as an American hippy dating from 1964, Paul Du Noyer is wrong in stating "America's flower children had dipped into their parents' trust funds and were on the march." In all the years I lived in the East Village and knew hundreds of original hippies, I met no more than a handful of people who could be thus described. The great majority of us were working class and/or middle class kids who were trying to change the world. Also, most of us had jobs. I was a busboy. My Dad never gave me a dime, nor did I ask.

Secondly, The Beatles: we hippies thought they were squares of the most severe type. They wore matching suits, like waiters. Department stores sold "Beatle wigs". All that screaming? Totally uncool. In fact, the fastest way to clear the room post-joint would be to put on a Beatles LP. So the idea of The Beatles as "proto-hippies" might work in some parts of the UK, but in the original home of hippies, it'd never work – and it didn't. They couldn't even get played on the underground FM radio stations hippies listened to.

Norman Gaines, Hartsdale, New York

…A small correction in your otherwise excellent article on Joe Meek [MOJO 325]. One shouldn't say "commit suicide", as it is not a crime. "Ended his life by suicide" is better.

Dr Tim Sales, Consultant Psychiatrist in Recovery for Brighton and Hove

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Printing: William Gibbons
MOJO (ISSN 1351-0193; USPS 17424) is published 12 times a year by H Bauer Publishing Ltd, Media House, Peterborough Business Park, Lynch Wood, Peterborough PE2 6EA, United Kingdom. H Bauer Publishing is a company registered in England and Wales with company number LP003328, registered address Academic House, 24-28 Oval Road, London NW1 7DT.
VAT no 918 5617 01.
The US annual subscription price is $114.98. Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named World Container Inc, 150-15, 183rd Street, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA.
Periodicals postage paid at Brooklyn, NY 11256.
US Postmaster: Send address changes to MOJO, World Container Inc, 150-15, 183rd Street, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA.
Subscription records are maintained at Bauer Media, Subscriptions, CDS Global, Tower House, Sovereign Park, Lathkill Street, Market Harborough, Leicester LE16 9EF, United Kingdom.
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2021 THE ESSENTIAL PREVIEW ALBUMS

Missing danger, with a new record and film, St. Vincent forges ahead.

"I MISS LIVE SHOWS so much," says Annie Clark, the force behind St. Vincent. "I miss the sweat. I miss the people. I miss the danger. I miss the communion. I miss everything about it."

Yet as the year ends, Clark – who has partly spent her downtime learning tennis and reading about Stalin – has a new live outlet. "I've taken to writing musicals for my family," she says, laughing. "There was a tradition where we would go and see A Christmas Carol and it was always hilariously bad but just wonderful. I half-remembered some of the songs, then I've rewritten them to be family specific. Then I'm insisting that everyone dress up in full costume. I'm making one of my nephews be Tiny Tim."

Fortunately, however, she's also completed a project for a wider audience: the follow-up to 2017's *Masseduction*, planned for late spring/summer. "It's locked and loaded," says Clark. "And I'm American so I *will* only use gun metaphors." Her sixth album, she explains, marks "a tectonic shift. I felt I had gone as far as I could possibly go with angularity. I was interested in going back to the music I've listened to more than any other – Stevie Wonder records from the early '70s, Sly And The Family Stone. I studied at the feet of those masters."

Masseduction's hot pink and leopardskin melted into "the colour palette of the world of Taxi Driver" or "Gena Rowlands in a Cassavetes film. I just wanted to capture the colours, the film stock, and tell these stories of being down and out, down on your luck." She thinks she was "subconsciously drawn" to the mood of post-'60s turbulence because "I imagine that's where the world will be in 2021, this immense amount of transition and, probably, a real resourcefulness and scrappiness."

Clark suggests her live shows will change, too. "My last tour was a whole bunch of production and high-concept video and razzle-dazzle and I can't go any further with that. I'm going to come down and just play. I don't think high-gloss sheen is going to be that resonant with people because it will feel very much 'let them eat cake'".

Yet another side of St. Vincent will appear with the wider summer release of The Nowhere Inn. "It's a scripted meta-documentary starring me and my best friend Carrie Brownstein," explains Clark, who co-wrote the Performance-inspired script with the Sleater-Kinney/Portlandia star. The Clark as imagined in the world of the film is "too boring a subject to make documentary on, so Carrie insists I do something to spice it up. I take that too far and that thing happens when people's alter ego and actual self combine, until you're not sure which is which and I become a monster."

The "bonkers meta-comedy horror narrative" springs from Clark's desire to avoid the "artist-sanctioned" concert film, the carefully curated "peek behind the mask". "I don't want to make propaganda," says Clark, "I want to make art."

Victoria Segal

> "I'm American so I *will* only use gun metaphors."
> **ST. VINCENT**

Meet ze monster: Annie Clark (left) and Carrie Brownstein in The Nowhere Inn.

Pamela Neal, Capital Pictures

Down but not out:
St. Vincent is back
and ready for a scrap.

DAVE GROHL IMAGINES NEW FOO FIGHTERS, THE STAGE, 30-YEAR *NEVERMIND* BOX.

WHEN DAVE Grohl played MOJO a selection of songs from the upcoming Foo Fighters album, *Medicine At Midnight*, back in February at his Los Angeles studio, he of course had no idea that a global shutdown would arrive the next month. Now, he's already thinking about a swift follow-up long-player.

"We started talking about maybe recording another record in the downtime," he says. "But who fucking knows?"

During the long months of lockdown, Grohl did some remote drumming recording for others and wrote short stories posted up on Instagram. Foo Fighters reconvened at their Studio 606 rehearsal room in September and thrilled once again in making loud noise together.

Dave Grohl: he's taking his medicine.

"When the six of us sit in our rehearsal space and play, it feels just as good as if there were a stadium full of people there," he enthuses. "Everyone has a stronger appreciation of being in this band than we ever have. Even just picking up an instrument to play with Taylor and Pat and Nate and Chris and Rami, that fills my heart now."

A series of European festival shows for summer 2021 has been posted up on the Foos' website, but Grohl is obviously not entirely sure whether they'll happen.

"To do anything within the new regulations and restrictions is really overwhelming," he stresses. "Just for us to go to our studio and rehearse, we're tested at least three or four times a week. The hard part is that we're not in control of any of this. And when I say 'we' I mean the human race (*laughs*).

"I still get calls from my manager saying, 'Hey, d'you wanna play Mexico City?' And I say, 'Yeah, of course…when?' 'Next summer.' I'm like, 'All right, fuck it. If it can actually happen, I'll be the first one there.' Realistically, I have no predictions at all. I don't know. I would imagine next summer, next autumn, we'll hopefully be out there doing shows."

There are also whispers of a 30th anniversary *Nevermind* box set for 2021, which will likely be put together by Nirvana bassist Krist Novoselic. "I honestly have not heard anything yet," says Grohl. "But I would imagine that if we're gonna do it, we'll do it right. Krist is responsible more than most people would think for a big part of the Nirvana aesthetic.

"I don't know what the fuck will be on it," he adds. "I mean, we only recorded 12 songs or whatever. It's not like we went in and made, y'know, *The White Album* outtakes. It was pretty streamlined."

Above all, Grohl's biggest hope for 2021 is clearly to get back out there and on-stage. "I miss everyone, I miss everywhere," he says. "I imagine that we're gonna walk out on a big stage with a big audience and it will be the most emotional, cathartic, fucking beautiful release.

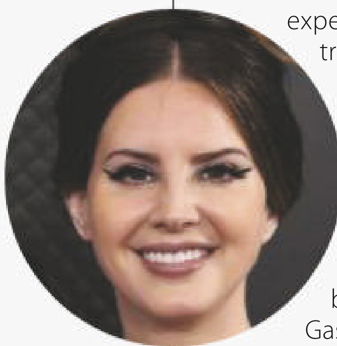
"The same way, y'know, in movies two lovers run in slow motion through a field of flowers then collide in a passionate embrace. That could be what the next Foo Fighters tour will be like, every fucking night (*laughs*). And I'm really looking forward to it."

Tom Doyle

> **"It will be the most emotional, cathartic, fucking beautiful release."**
> **DAVE GROHL**

ALSO WORKING

…**NOEL GALLAGHER** is working on a new **High Flying Birds** release. As well as wanting **John Squire** to play guitar on it, he says new song Pretty Boy sounds like The Cure. "I'm doing this album on my own," he told Radio X. "They'll be pop songs but they'll be a bit edgy." Brother **Liam**'s also been in the studio… **LANA DEL REY**'s (left) *Chemtrails Over The Country Club* is expected in spring, with tracks expected to include If This Is The End… I Want A Boyfriend and Tulsa Jesus Freak… **RYLEY WALKER** promises that his new, **John McEntire**-produced album is a cross between Genesis and Gastr Del Sol… **ROBERT PLANT** is working on new albums: *Band Of Joy Volume 2* is expected later in 2021 (last year, that band's Charlie Patton Highway (Turn It Up – Part 1) was released on his *Digging Deep: Subterranea* compilation), while he's also dropped hints that a new album with **Alison Krauss** is in production… **JACKSON BROWNE** (right) will release a new album in October: he shared a track from it, A Little Soon To Say, last March, shortly after confirming his Covid infection … **GRUFF RHYS**'s new solo joint arrives in June. Says Gruff, "I hope this album and its component songs, sound like they come from a very personal place, and that the fact they are all inspired to varying degrees by events relating to Mount Paektu, from 2333BC to the present day, remains coincidental to the listener…"



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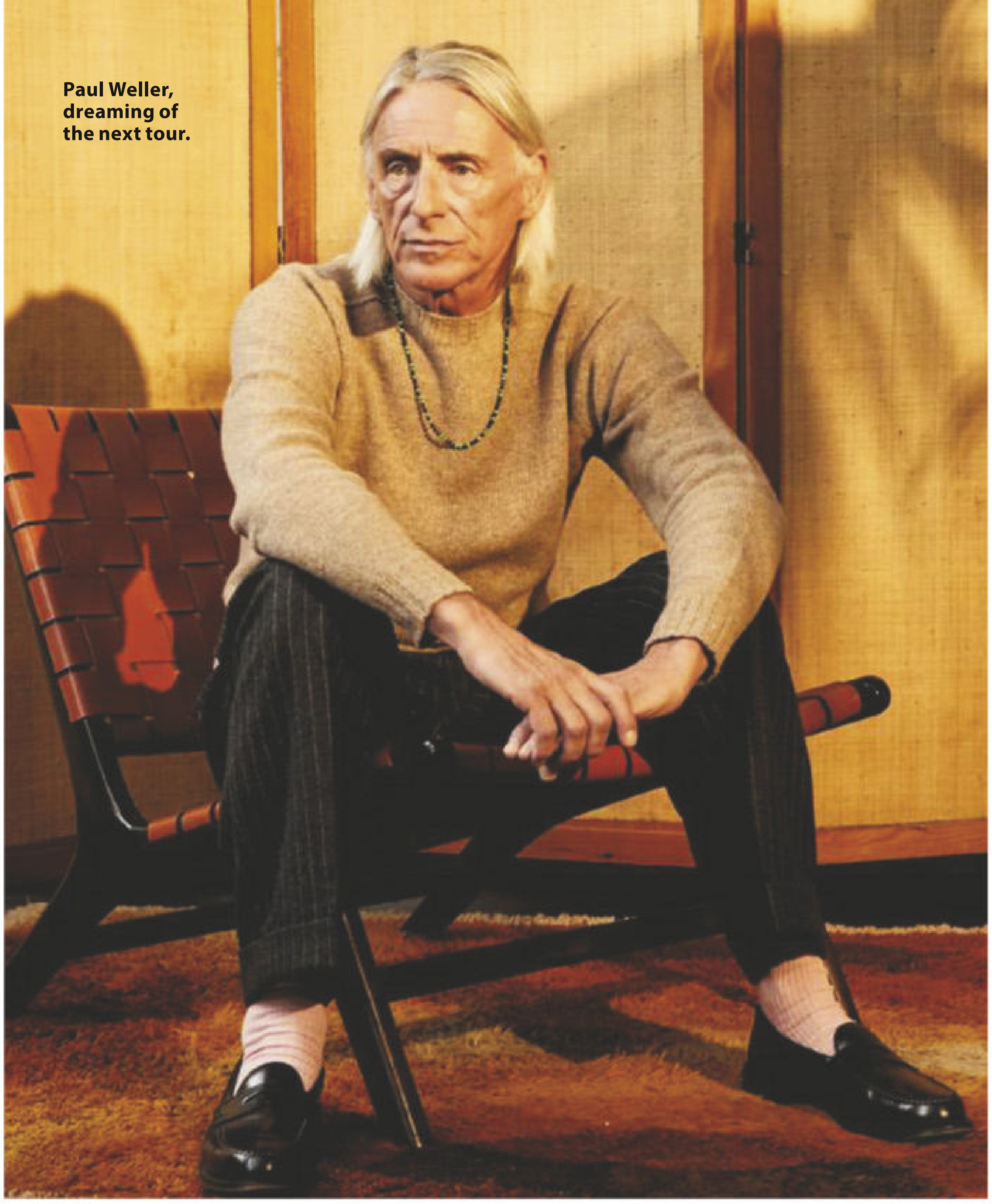


Paul Weller, dreaming of the next tour.

Another **Weller** LP? Get ready for *Fat Pop (Volume I)*!

BACK IN November 2019, MOJO was invited to Paul Weller's Black Barn studio for a sneak preview of his *On Sunset* album, which topped the UK charts in July. Incredibly, almost a year to the day later, the Modfather is on the blower announcing another new record, *Fat Pop (Volume 1)*, begun during the first lockdown in March 2020 and completed after restrictions were lifted in August.

"I made a conscious decision to make another record when everything shut down," says Weller of the quickfire 12-song long-player. "So I started recording on my own, playing along with a click-track or a drum track, then I sent the [sound files] out to the band to record their parts. It kept us working until we all got back together."

The band reconvened at the Black Barn in the summer, where it was decided to air some of the new material in a special 'live in the studio' film, Mid-Sömmer Musik (available to stream now). The performance included newies Moving Canvas, a chunky, '70s-style chugger; the trippy, Traffic-esque Testify; and a flowing pastoral number titled Still Glides The Stream.

MOJO assumes the last of these was inspired by Lark Rise To Candleford author Flora Thompson's novel of the same name. "What?" replies the Modfather. "I don't know, mate… Chopper [Steve Craddock] did the lyrics to that. He's probably nicked them out of someone's fucking book and not told me! His lyrics were good poetry. I turned it round and made it about our local street sweeper. Those people 'coming here and taking all our jobs' form the infrastructure of this country. We'd be fucked without them. If anything, they should be paid more."

The opening track on the album is a clipped, electronic post-punk rocker titled Cosmic Fringe, which Weller hints will also be the lead single. "But it's not representative of the record," he emphasises. "All the tracks are different. There's a [shared] sonic thing going on, but this time it's all about the songs. They could all be singles, that's why it's called *Fat Pop (Volume 1)*. Stan [Kybert] the producer said it should be called 'Greatest Hits', but I thought that was going a little bit far…"

Fat Pop (Volume 1) is scheduled for release in May 2021 – "hopefully on my birthday [25th]" – with a tour following in June. "It will be two years since I've played live, which is unprecedented," says Paul. "I'll be 63 by then, nearly at retirement age. It'll probably be my farewell tour (*laughs*). Hopefully not."

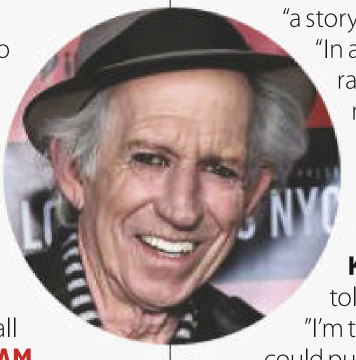
Meanwhile, Weller is finishing off a record with singer-songwriter Declan O'Rourke and working on Weller band-member Steve Pilgrim's new album. The idea of more lockdowns, however, casts a worrying shadow over Weller-world.

"To be honest, mate, I'm scared at the thought of another six or seven months of not working," he says. "Maybe I'll make another album (*laughs*). Actually, I'm thinking of getting a part-time job. I might retrain like that Tory cunt [Chancellor Rishi Sunak] suggested. I might go for something like school janitor, cleaning out the shithouse. That would be good."

Pat Gilbert

> "All the tracks are different… it's all about the songs."
>
> **PAUL WELLER**

FAT WHITE FAMILY's **Saul Adamczewski** releases his debut solo LP on the Domino label next year. It's described as "a dark acoustic-y record." His Fat Whites bandmate **Lias Saoudi** will appear on **Raf Rundell**'s next album, which will also feature contributions from Blockhead **Chaz Jankel**… **MILEY CYRUS**'s covers album of Metallica songs has yet to get a release date, but one metal madman who can't wait to hear it is Judas Priest's **Rob Halford**. "She's a metalhead, she's always throwing the horns up," he told the Life In The Stocks podcast … there's a new **AMYL & THE SNIFFERS** (left) LP in June …**TEENAGE FANCLUB**'s *Endless Arcade* arrives in March. Lead guitarist/singer **Raymond McGinley** described their vision for it as, "Don't create a pastiche of yourself. Don't try to be cool or witty, or try too hard" …produced by **Bob Ezrin**, **ALICE COOPER**'s *Detroit Stories* will pay homage to the "angry, outcast" rock'n'roll scene of his hometown. The MC5's **Wayne Kramer**, Detroit Wheels drummer **Johnny 'Bee' Badanjek** and Amp Fiddler/Jazzanova bassist **Paul Randolph** all guest… in spring, **GRAHAM COXON**'s dystopian fantasy concept LP *Superstate* comes with a graphic novel to illustrate its 15 songs. It tells "a story of escape," says Coxon. "In a society where war rages between… negativity and positivity, encouragement and discouragement…" …of **THE ROLLING STONES**' next LP, **Keith Richards** (left) told the BBC in November, "I'm trying to figure out if we could pull a session together, but it's all a bit of an experiment really…"



Ellen Virgona, Getty

Reflect what you are: The Warhol-era Velvet Underground (from left) Lou Reed, Moe Tucker, Nico, Sterling Morrison, John Cale.

Todd Haynes' Velvets doc presents unseen film and Jonathan Richman!

IF LOCKDOWN HAS taught us anything, it's to appreciate the escape and succour well-crafted entertainment can deliver. But next year, with its hopes of a restoration of something approaching normal life, an outstanding array of music films will make leaving the couch harder than we imagine.

One of the most enticing is Todd Haynes' documentary The Velvet Underground, which will be shown on Apple TV+. He discussed the film at MOMA in New York in August with film curator Rajendra Roy, revealing that he completed his interviews for the film in 2018 before working on his legal thriller Dark Waters in 2019. He picked it up again in time for Covid, and finished it in Venice with his editors Affonso Gonçalves and Adam Kurnitz, who also worked on Jim Jarmusch's 2016 Stooges movie Gimme Danger. Haynes said he hadn't "had his hands on a film to this degree" since 2007's multi-actor, Dylan-inspired bio-drama I'm Not There.

Promising first-hand testimony from the key personalities of the group and wider Warhol milieu, it will also feature, "a treasure trove of never-before-seen performances and a rich collection of recordings, Warhol films, and other experimental art." As the director said at MOMA: "The amount of archives that we've collected for the film are remarkable. The closing credits sequence alone is about nine minutes long."

Warhol's films and his questioning of dominant norms are, Haynes explained, critical to the film. A similar spirit infused his 1998 glam drama Velvet Goldmine, which Haynes explained as "the gayness, the queerness, the sense of camp and what that sort of raises in terms of the way, artists, particularly Warhol, were calling into question all kinds of attitudes and assumptions… I insist that there is something essential about that queerness too, or gayness [Haynes also used the words "faggotiness" and "swishiness"] that I think is an essential aspect of this music."

The Modern Lovers' Jonathan Richman, the super-fan who saw them dozens of times, is one devotee who appears in the film. "I never expected to be able to meet them or see [The Velvet Underground]," Richman recalled, to San Francisco's Radio Valencia in 2014, of meeting his heroes, "[but] I was magnetically drawn there, and I had to be there… they knew, obnoxious as I was, that it was life and death, they could see, they could see in my eyes that it was life and death for this little high school squirt."

At MOMA, Haynes recalled an anecdote when Richman, already an obsessive, saw the group for the first time in Cambridge, Massachusetts. "They were just about to break with Warhol, but Warhol was there, and so was Nico, she wasn't even allowed on-stage at this point," Haynes said. "So little Jonathan Richman, awkward teenager… went up to Warhol and he said, 'Mr Warhol, erm, I don't really think I understand your art.' And Andy said, 'Yes you do.'"

Clive Prior

"Jonathan Richman said, 'Mr Warhol, I don't really think I understand your art.'"

THE BIOPIC EXPLODES WITH BILLIE HOLIDAY, ARETHA, BUDDY AND MORE

Blues requiem: Andra Day as Billie Holiday in forthcoming biopic The United States Vs Billie Holiday.

Andy Warhol eyes the next shot; (insets, from top) Todd Haynes; Jonathan Richman.

IF THERE'S A message for musicians and moguls alike in 2021, it's this: if you're not writing, producing, licensing or developing a big-name music biz biopic, why not? The stadium theatrics of Queen saw Bohemian Rhapsody handclap its way to $904 million at the box office in 2018; last year Elton's Rocketman pocketed $195 million.

Having owned TV talent show American Idol in 2004, previous wannabe Jennifer Hudson made her acting debut in the movie version of Broadway smash Dreamgirls two years later. Technically a "film à clef" it shared certain non-actionably coincidental similarities to the rise of The STbremes. In it, Hudson essayed a fictiofidised version of Florence Ballard. In doing so, she linked back to Lady Sings The Blues (1973), in which Diana Ross played Billie Holiday for director Sidney J Furie. Thus does a lineage emerge of singers able to act, and actors with a pressing desire to sing. This year, black music icons Holiday and Aretha Franklin will appear in their own heavyweight biopics: in order of proposed release, The United States Vs. Billie Holiday (March 12) and Respect (late 2021).

This thrilling icon-off helps even the score for classic soul. Respect is Franklin's story, developed by TV writer Tracey Scott Wilson and Callie Khouri (Thelma & Louise) with the full blessing of the late soul queen, who chose Hudson herself. The star told Empire, "She'd be very hands-on. What an honour that was." Flanking the certified belter are promising turns from Marc Maron (Jerry Wexler) and Mary J Blige (Dinah Washington). Franklin is also the subject of the latest in National Geographic's historical anthology series Genius, with Franklin played by Tony-winning, Oscar-nominated Londoner Cynthia Erivo.

The Holiday bio, directed by iconoclast Lee Daniels, takes a chance on screen debutante and R&B hitmaker Andra Day as the troubled jazz singer. Part-discovery of Stevie Wonder's, Day has all the tremulous power of a singer twice her age, burning down the house with I Put A Spell On You at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

The vanilla Buddy Holly Story earned Gary Busey an Oscar nomination in 1978, but Lubbock's finest is due a more accurate account. Holly's widow Maria Elena greenlit Clear Lake, focusing on the 1958 Biggest Show Of Stars tour, its multi-ethnic vision and the plane crash. Director Bruce Beresford called it a "tragic story… with vivid characterisations". Irish actor Ruairi O'Connor plays Holly, while R&B superstar Nelly is Chuck Berry.

Fast & Furious star Tyrese Gibson is, or will be, Teddy Pendergrass (another project touched by Lee Daniels) and has already called it a "journey", while Baz Luhrmann's Elvis movie squares Once Upon a Time In Hollywood star Austin Butler as Presley against Tom Hanks's Colonel Tom Parker. In uncertain times for film, all will be well aware of the fictional advice given to a young Aretha in Respect's trailer: "Honey, find the songs that move you – or you ain't going nowhere."

Andrew Collins

ALSO FILMING

…a new **MARTIN SCORSESE** (right) documentary project will focus on the 1970s New York City music scene. Known for his use of **The Rolling Stones** and girl groups to soundtrack some of his landmark films – **The Clash** had a fleeting cameo as "street scum" in 1983's The King Of Comedy, of course – Scorsese's name was linked to a **Ramones** doc in 2016… **Ron Howard** is making a documentary about **LOUIS ARMSTRONG** with the help of the jazz great's Educational Foundation. Accordingly, the majority of the audio, film footage and photography that exists will be available to him, as well as Armstrong's personal diaries and the daily audio recordings he made on reel-to-reel tape from the '50s until his death in 1971… **Edgar Wright** continues to finesse his career-wide **SPARKS** documentary, which promises footage from **Ron** and **Russell Mael**'s 2018 London date, archival film and interviews with eminent admirers… producer **Graham King** is developing biopics for the **BEE GEES** and **MICHAEL JACKSON**; Queen/Elton fixer **Dexter Fletcher** wants to dramatise the life of **MADONNA**, while **Alice Cooper**'s desire to be played by **Johnny Depp** might possibly be cooled by Depp's recent legal difficulties… it's rumoured that **Bernard MacMahon**'s impending official **LED ZEPPELIN** (left) documentary, which will cover the group's career from their founding until 1970, will be titled Apollo… a biopic of **COSI FANNI TUTTI**, based on her memoir Art Sex Music, will be directed by **Andrew Hulme**. Casting for the lead took place in November…

Getty (5), Alamy

Richard Thompson drops memoir Beeswing

THERE IS a powerful moment near the start of Richard Thompson's memoir, Beeswing. He is describing the terrible guest houses that Fairport Convention stayed in during their early gigging days, rooms with damp nylon bedding and single-bar fires. "Mostly we avoided staying overnight anywhere," he writes, "preferring to save money by driving back to London."

If you know the tragedy that overshadowed the group's early years – that drummer Martin Lamble died in a crash when they were returning from a gig in Birmingham on May 12, 1969 – you'll feel a chilly sense of foreboding. If you know Thompson's skills as a lyricist, you'll recognise an unromantic matter-of-factness, an unwillingness to embellish, to let the cold facts drill down.

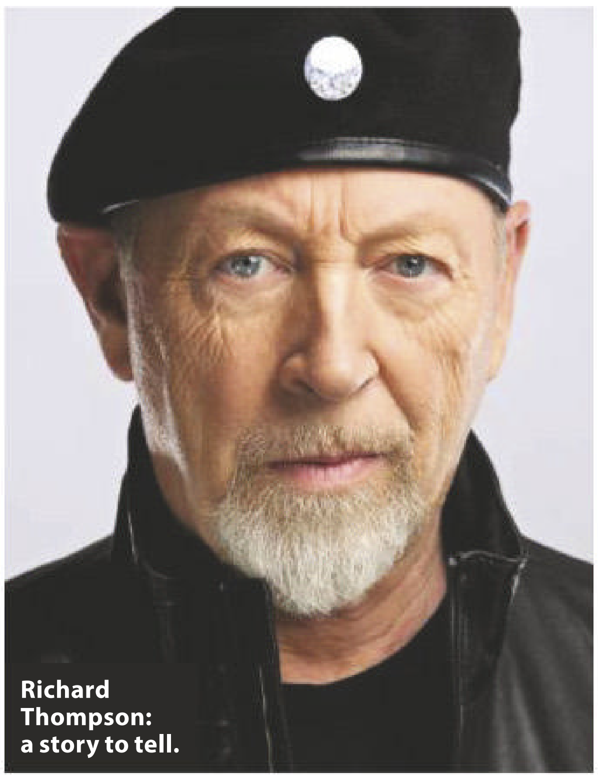
"I think I'm incapable of being romantic," says Thompson, with a dry chuckle. "I'm romantic in life but not in my writing. I'm glad that works. I mean, it's my first book."

Conceived some years back with the late arts journalist Scott Timberg, Beeswing recounts Thompson's life story from 1967 to 1975, from joining Fairport Convention to the spiritual questioning that came in the wake of 1975's *Pour Down Like Silver*.

"That was Scott's idea," says Thompson. "I also thought, There's a story to tell there. If someone said: Write a book about your life from 1985 to 1995, I'd think, My God, are you serious? Nothing new happened. But in the '60s and '70s, everything was new and vivid, and I thought that was worth conveying."

Thompson's prose style, like his lyrics, is simultaneously vivid and dreamlike, yet faithful to the facts. His encounters with Jimi Hendrix and Nick Drake are unadorned by subsequent knowledge. Yet his recounting of the Fairports' tragic tour-van crash, the recording of *Liege And Lief*, or his complex relationships with former band members Sandy Denny and Dave Swarbrick are explored in haunting depth.

"You think you deal with everything," says Thompson, "but you don't. You kind of tuck the past away and don't challenge yourself about it. But if you're writing a book, you really have to deal with this stuff. In that sense writing the book was really cathartic for me."


Richard Thompson: a story to tell.

Yet while Thompson enjoyed the writing process ("I might do detective fiction next") he hated the editing. Early drafts of Beeswing were more impressionistic, the chapters interspersed with vivid encoded dreams. Much of his hallucinatory prose remains intact, but those dreams are consigned to the book's appendix. "The editors pushed me to be more chronological," he says. "If I'd had my way, the whole thing that would have been much more like a dream."

He also had to leave out a lot of the spiritual elements regarding his life as a Sufi ("That's another book," he admits). As the book is now due for release in spring, MOJO wonders if it still has to be read by lawyers.

"Why?" asks Thompson, slightly startled. "I'm nice about everyone. I mean, [ex-wife] Linda's asked for a copy but only because she's bored in lockdown. She wants something to read, and it's always more exciting to read a book that you're actually in."

> "You think you deal with everything, but you don't."
> **RICHARD THOMPSON**

Andrew Male

MORE BOOKS!

1 Nina Simone's Gum
Warren Ellis

The odyssey of a piece of gum chewed and discarded by the great singer when she played Nick Cave's Meltdown in 1999. It was retrieved by Warren Ellis as a sacred keepsake. "Warren has turned this memento… into a genuine religious artefact," says Cave.
Due: *September*

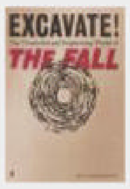
2 There And Black Again
Don Letts with Mal Peachey

Letts revisits a charmed life in punk, reggae, film and beyond. Starring Marley, the Pistols, The Clash, The Slits, Nelson Mandela, Chuck D and others. With Letts' views on the Black Lives Matter movement.
Due: *March*

3 This Book Is A Song
Jarvis Cocker

Exploring the essence of creativity, this non-memoir will mix biography, essays and visuals. "In a song you're always having to explain things in the least number of words," says Jarv," but for a book to work, you kind of have to eke it out."
Due: *September*

4 Excavate! The Wonderful And Frightening World Of The Fall
Edited by Bob Stanley and Tessa Norton

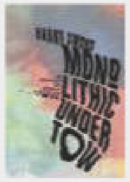


This guide to what makes The Fall The Fall has essays, prose, lyrics, art-work and ephemera from contributors such as writer Adelle Stripe, artist Sian Pattenden, journalists Mark Sinker and Sukhdev Sandhu, and Stewart Lee.
Due: *April*

5 Growing Out Of It: My Life In Madness
Lee Thompson

Sax-playing, levitating, maddest Mad of them all shares his unique perspective on a life sentence in Camden's Ministry Of Nuttiness. "Lee was particularly cool," Suggs assures us.
Due: April

6 Monolithic Undertow
Harry Sword



"Explores the power of the drone," via Neolithic beginnings, the middle ages, raga, dub, Hawkwind and Sunn O))). Foreword writer Beck calls it, "An inspired and intuitive navigation of the drone continuum."
Due: *February*

7 Electric Dreams: The Human League, Heaven 17, And The Sound Of The Steel City
David Buckley

It's been in the works for a decade, but the MOJO writer and Bowie/Kraftwerk biographer's history of the Sheffield synth principals will at last appear. Includes the final interview of the late producer Martin Rushent.
Due: *September*

8 From Manchester With Love
Paul Morley

A "genre-defying" biography of Factory Records giant Tony Wilson, where the author also recalls as a "bullshitting hustler, flashy showman, aesthetic adventurer… loyal friend."
Due: *October*

2021 REISSUES

…**DAVID BOWIE**'s (right) next retrospective box set will be released next year. Taking up where the 2018 box *Loving The Alien (1983–1988)* left off, it will cover the years up to 2001. However, the **Tin Machine** albums will not be included, leading to suspicions they might get a box of their own …speculation is rife that **NEW ORDER** will release an extras-packed, beautifully designed 'Ultimate Edition' of 1985's *Low-Life* in 2021… the **BLUE NOTE** label will continue their high-quality, VFM vinyl reissues. Expect **Eric Dolphy**'s *Out To Lunch* in May, **Grant Green**'s *Idle Moments* in June and **Herbie Hancock**'s *Maiden Voyage* in July… after his work remastering and annotating the **Richard & Linda Thompson** box *Hard Luck Stories*, **Andrew Batts** is preparing something similar for **BOBBIE GENTRY** (right) and **MARIANNE FAITHFULL**… a giant **TEARDROP EXPLODES** box set continues to be assembled by **Julian Cope** and the group's PR Mick Houghton: full soundboard recordings from the mythic Club Zoo, demos and unreleased songs are expected. Expect it in autumn… Belgian synthpop eminences **TELEX** begin a series of remastered reissues on the Mute label, who also release a long-awaited **CAN** live album in the autumn… a special 50th anniversary reissue of **NEIL YOUNG**'s *After The Gold Rush* arrives in March. The cover art's solarized on special silver-coated paper stock, while the vinyl edition box includes a single with an unreleased version of Wonderin', recorded in August '69…

David Kaptein, Getty (2)

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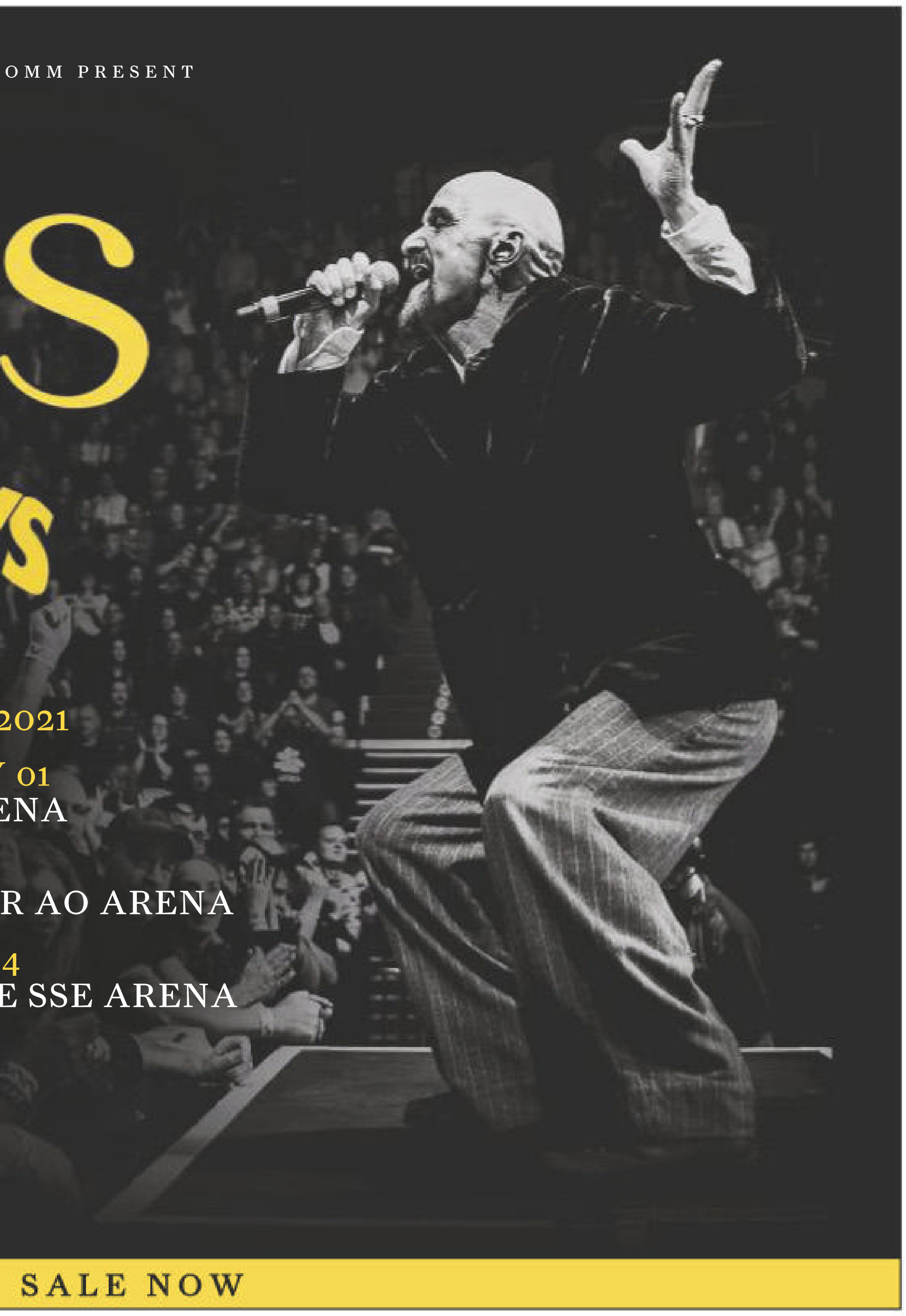

james

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WED	03	**MARGATE WINTER GARDENS**
THU	04	**LONDON EVENTIM APOLLO**
FRI	05	**CAMBRIDGE CORN EXCHANGE**
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MON	08	**SOUTHEND CLIFFS PAVILION**
TUE	09	**SOUTHEND CLIFFS PAVILION**
THU	11	**GUILDFORD G LIVE**
FRI	12	**BRIGHTON CENTRE**
SAT	13	**BOURNEMOUTH INTL CENTRE**
MON	15	**OXFORD NEW THEATRE**
TUE	16	**LLANDUDNO VENUE CYMRU THEATRE**
THU	18	**NEWCASTLE O2 CITY HALL**
FRI	19	**HARROGATE CONVENTION CENTRE**
SAT	20	**EDINBURGH USHER HALL**
MON	22	**STOKE REGENT THEATRE**
TUE	23	**LEICESTER DE MONTFORT HALL**
WED	24	**NOTTINGHAM ROYAL CONCERT HALL**
FRI	26	**HULL BONUS ARENA**
SAT	27	**MANCHESTER O2 APOLLO**
SUN	28	**BLACKBURN KING GEORGES HALL**
TUE	30	**HALIFAX VICTORIA THEATRE**

DECEMBER 2021

WED	01	**SHEFFIELD CITY HALL**
FRI	03	**BIRMINGHAM UTILITA ARENA**
SAT	04	**GLASGOW THE SSE HYDRO**

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THU	**19**	**HULL BONUS ARENA**
FRI	**20**	**NEWCASTLE UTILITA ARENA**
SAT	**21**	**NOTTINGHAM MOTORPOINT ARENA**
MON	**23**	**BELFAST CUSTOM HOUSE SQUARE**
TUE	**24**	**DUBLIN 3ARENA**
THU	**26**	**CARDIFF MOTORPOINT ARENA**
FRI	**27**	**BIRMINGHAM RESORTS WORLD ARENA**
SAT	**28**	**LEEDS FIRST DIRECT ARENA**
SUN	**29**	**GLASGOW THE SSE HYDRO**
TUE	**31**	**LIVERPOOL M&S BANK ARENA**

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WED	**01**	**BOURNEMOUTH INTL CENTRE**
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THE
SPIDERS

You better hang on to yourself: Johnny Flynn as David Bowie in Stardust.

JOHNNY FLYNN

The folk singer/actor reflects on playing Bowie in Stardust: includes teeth, the "jukebox musical", and meeting Bob Dylan.

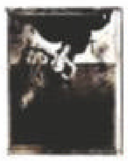
"WHAT FOLLOWS is (mostly) fiction." So runs the disclaimer that opens Stardust, a new film that follows a 1971 road-trip David Bowie took across America, when his career was at a low ebb but his creative antennae were hyperactive – to culminate, soon, in the creation of Ziggy Stardust. Some liberties are taken here for dramatic purposes, and the Bowie estate refused to license any use of his music. But the actor/musician Johnny Flynn brings a quiet emotional power to his starring role. At 37, Flynn' s real-life career is thriving on stage and screen. For the best introduction to his music, try the pastoral English score he provided for that beguiling TV comedy series Detectorists. Until then, though, Bowie…

What surprised you about Bowie in researching the role?

In this period his confidence was paper-thin. He seemed resigned to bad luck. He turns up in America and everything is against him. The album he made, *The Man Who Sold The World*, is dark and heavy but the US paperwork means he can't even play it. To my understanding he was running away from those songs, he wouldn't talk about the themes of madness, his brother Terry [committed to a mental hospital] and the fear of his own mind collapsing. He was looking for ways to run away from himself. And in a moment of metamorphosis, he realises it's OK to wear this absolute mask and create a character.

What feels like the key scene to you?

Obviously it's imagined, moment by moment, but we know about this guy Ron Oberman, the PR at Mercury. There's a scene where Ron gets angry and you see David opening up. This odd couple are bound by love and respect for outsiders: David learns about The Legendary Stardust Cowboy and Iggy Pop. It really happened. He had this banal suburban childhood and to become this ultimate rock star was his way out of mediocrity. And when David meets who he thought was the real Lou Reed, it turns out to be Doug Yule. In the scene after that he says, "What's the difference between a rock star and somebody impersonating a rock star?" Ron is saying, basically, you can fake it. That's the revelation, that David has some kind of impostor syndrome, until he realises that everybody's faking it.



JOHNNY'S STASH

In like Flynn for five faves.

1 **Love Minus Zero/No Limit** *Bob Dylan* (FROM *BRINGING IT ALL BACK HOME*, COLUMBIA, 1965)
2 **Ol' 55** *Tom Waits* (FROM *THE EARLY YEARS VOLUME 2*, BIZARRE/STRAIGHT, 1993)
3 **Factory Girl** *The Rolling Stones* (FROM *BEGGARS BANQUET*, DECCA, 1968)
4 **King Harvest (Has Surely Come)** *The Band* (FROM *THE BAND*, CAPITOL, 1969)
5 **Gigantic** *Pixies* (FROM *SURFER ROSA*, 4AD, 1988)

I'm not sure all this stuff would be in the big studio jukebox musical version of this story, it would probably be two minutes of screen time. It doesn't negate the right of that other sort of film to exist, but to be offended by this film is pointless.

Did the estate's refusal force you to work harder with what you did have?

Yeah. I'm not into those jukebox musicals, I'd rather listen to the records… I didn't want to do that with David Bowie, he's important enough to me to not want to fuck with it.

To play him, what did you have to do on the physical level?

Well, I'm wearing one contact lens. And those teeth… They're by the same guy who made Rami Malek's Freddie Mercury teeth [for the Queen biopic Bohemian Rhapsody] which I've still got in my Halloween drawer to scare the kids with. Most people have very different bone structure to David Bowie's, he was unique. I wasn't going for an out-and-out impersonation because, weirdly, the harder you try to do that the more people can pick holes in it. But I lost a lot of weight, about two stone. My own clothes were falling off me.

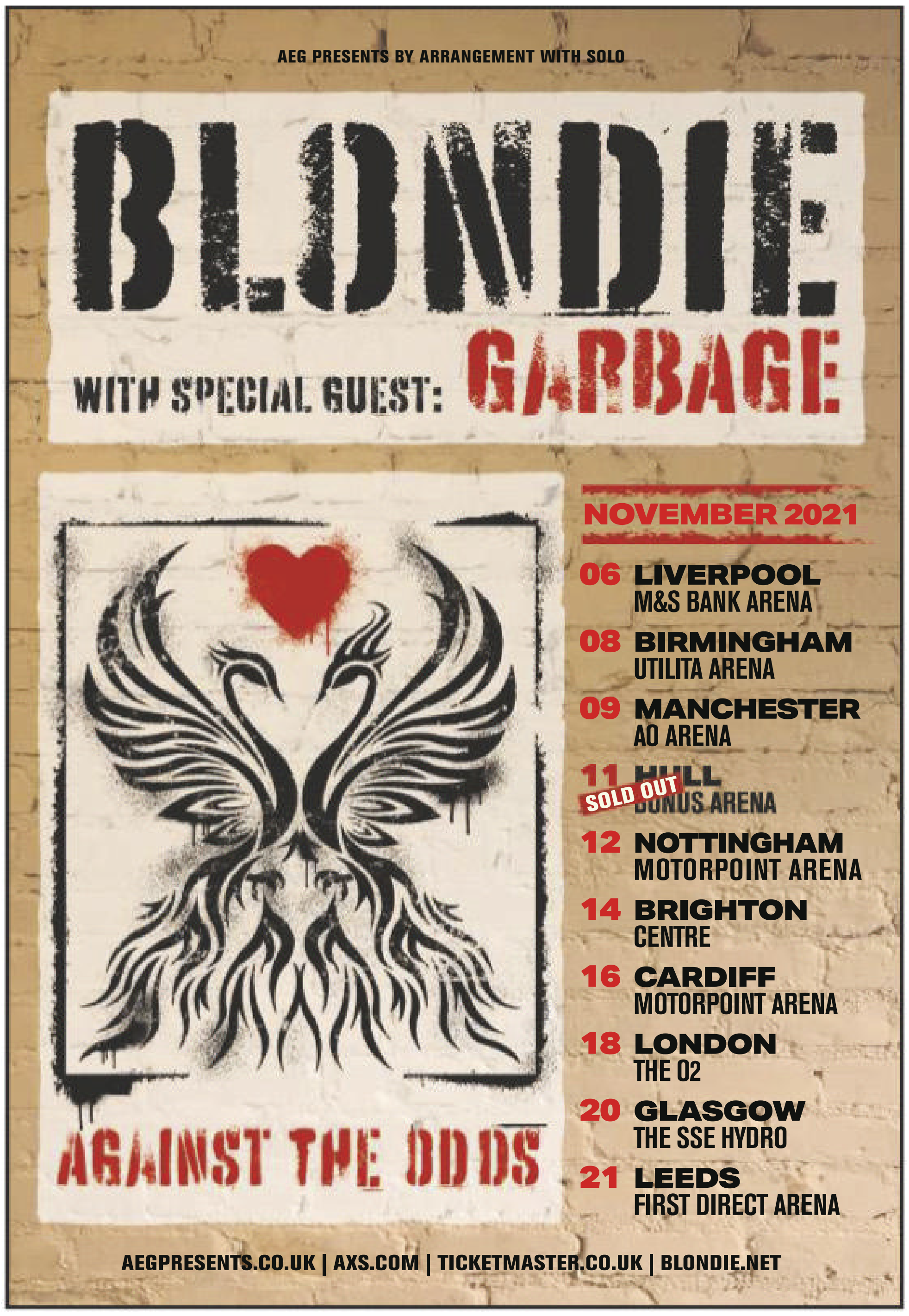
> **"To be offended by this film is pointless."**
> **JOHNNY FLYNN**

Tell us something you've never told an interviewer before.

I was doing a play called Jerusalem with Mark Rylance and we bonded over our love of Bob Dylan. In the 1980s Mark had a terrible time making a film with Dylan called Hearts Of Fire, and his wife Claire said, "Don't worry, you will meet again." Jerusalem became this huge hit and one night we'd have Paul McCartney in, the next night Mick Jagger. We got a bit vainglorious and wrote to Bob Dylan: sure enough, he was doing shows in London and had a night off. He just wanted a private box. I met him, he thanked me for the tickets, we waved him off and Mark turns and says, "We've fulfilled the prophecy!"

Paul Du Noyer

Stardust is in UK cinemas and available on digital platforms on January 15, 2021.



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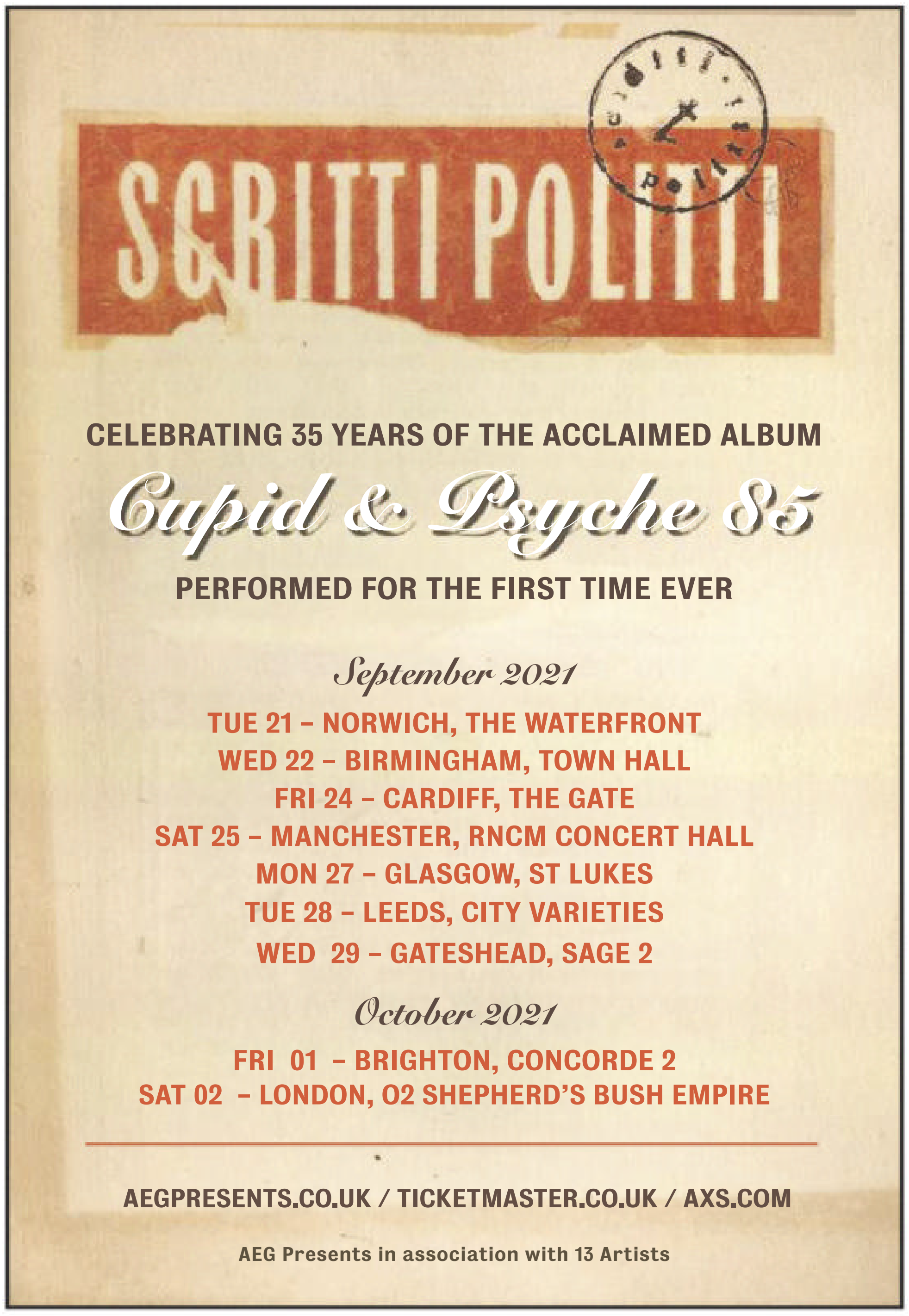

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The Shadows Of Knight (from left) Jerry McGeorge, Jimy Sohns with new guitarist Michael Weber Photo-shopped in; (below) the 21st century band on stage.

WELCOME BACK TO ILLINOIS GARAGE PUNK LEGENDS THE SHADOWS OF KNIGHT!

“I WAS THE ORIGINAL wild man!” says Shadows Of Knight founder and frontman Jimy Sohns. “There was lots of partying, lots of girls.” Indeed, Sohns only stopped living the rock’n’roll lifestyle when sentenced to three years in prison for cocaine possession in 1982. “C’est la vie,” he shrugs. Now Sohns and founder-guitarist Jerry McGeorge have released the “autobiographical” Wild Man on Little Steven Van Zandt ’s Wicked Cool label. It’s the pair’s first collaboration in 53 years, and a mind- bending 54 years after their snarling garage punk benchmark Gloria.

Born in suburban Prospect Heights, Illinois, 16-year-old blues fan Sohns was inspired to form the group, initially called The Shadows, during British Invasion year 1964. When Chet Atkins devotee McGeorge joined the following year, they hit their stride, honing their craft at local teen hang out the Cellar Bar. “It was packed, the audience screaming,” remembers McGeorge in awe. “Most shows ended in complete chaos!” Signing to the Dunwich label, The Shadows Of Knight released a cover of Them B-side Gloria as their debut 45.

> “Gloria made us rock stars – momentarily!”
> **JERRY McGEORGE**

“Our drummer Tommy [Schiffour] had a pen pal in the UK,” McGeorge continues. “They swapped records, Tommy sent him blues, he sent Tommy The Hollies, Manfred Mann and Them doing Gloria. We knew if we covered it, it would be the one to break, and it made us rock stars – momentarily!”

There followed the searing 45s Oh Yeah, Bad Little Woman and I’m Gonna Make You Mine, plus two albums, 1966’s *Gloria* and the same year’s *Back Door Men*, all defined by snot, attitude and defiance. Yet the intensity couldn’t last. McGeorge departed in 1967 – “It was all falling apart, getting messy,” he says – and after a stint in HP Lovecraft, he quit music in 1978. Sohns, meanwhile, led a reconfigured Shadows Of Knight line-up, joining Buddah subsidiary Super K for the group’s self-titled third album and the bubblegum pop of 1969’s Shake, their final US Top 50 entry.

After the group fizzled out in the early ’70s, Sohns spent time road-managing Chicago punk group Skafish, often joining them on-stage for the group’s encore of Gloria. Later, while serving in East Moline Correctional Center he formed prison group Jimy Sohns And The Cons. “We were really good, really bluesy,” he says fondly.

Since his release, he has led different incarnations of The Shadows Of Knight, but it was reuniting with McGeorge in 2016 for a sort-of 50th anniversary show at the H.O.M.E Bar in Arlington Heights, Illinois that motivated the pair to record again, this time with new multi-instrumentalist recruit Michael Weber. “It felt right,” says Sohns, who won’t be drawn on the possibility of a new album, before recklessly adding, “Who knows where it might lead?”

Lois Wilson

Get Wild Man at BandCamp now.

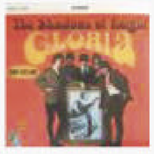
John Hora

KNIGHT MOVES

Three Shadow’d splendours.

Gloria

DUNWICH, 1966



“A powder keg!” yells Sohns of the group’s explosive debut. Their live set recorded in the studio, it blasts Brit Invasion blues back Stateside. Exuberant and frenetic.

Back Door Men

DUNWICH, 1966

Album two added ‘Hawk’ Wolinski on organ for distorted, in-the-garage covers of Hey Joe, Bad Little Woman and more. “A scream,” says Sohns.

Raw’N’Alive At The Cellar, Chicago 1966!

SUNDAZED, 2015

“There was no dicking about,” declares Sohns of this hormonal and hi-fi Cellar Bar recording. Chuck and Bo are covered; the extended Gloria is righteous.

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True believer: Julien Baker channels her inner scream.

> **"I thought I was possessed by the devil."**
> **JULIEN BAKER**

MEET JULIEN BAKER, THE EMO-FOLKIE PHOEBE BRIDGERS "RIPS OFF"!

PHOEBE BRIDGERS, who knows a thing or two about songwriting, is a huge Julien Baker fan. "Sometimes Julien's music makes me want to go home and write, and other times it makes me want to quit music forever," she tells MOJO. "By being in a band with her, I hope to divert attention from how much I rip her off."

That band is Boygenius, the all-female trio that united in 2018 after US singer-songwriters Baker, Bridgers and Lucy Dacus co-headlined a US tour. Following a Boygenius EP and gigs, the band returned to their own individual pursuits. In Baker's case, it was to her base in Nashville, and work on her third album. *Little Oblivions* unflinchingly reflects on the traumas that have defined Baker's young life to date, channelled through haunting melodies and her plaintive, country-lonesome voice.

Baker's first two albums, 2015 debut *Sprained Ankle* and 2017's *Turn Out The Lights*, were 95 per cent voice and electric guitar: a hybrid of folk and emo. *Little Oblivions* is no less intimate, but Baker has upgraded to soaring full-band arrangements. "I'd never before had more than a week to make a record, but I was able to workshop *Little Oblivions*," she explains. "Really, I just wanted drums – they felt good!"

Her love of drums stems back to 2005, when the 10-year-old Baker discovered Green Day. Despite a devout Christian upbringing, she was encouraged to express herself outside of religion, starting on her dad's guitar. Following "an esoteric rabbit hole to punk and hardcore," Baker eventually arrived at slowcore emo band Pedro The Lion.

"They were the first super-personal music I'd heard. I realised I didn't have to express myself aggressively to be impactful. I didn't want to scream."

Baker nevertheless had good reason to scream. Though her parents and church accepted her homosexuality, "I couldn't escape without mental baggage," she says. "I thought I was possessed by the devil for being gay." Alcohol and drug dependency only made it harder to accept herself. She left her home city of Memphis for Nashville to study audio-engineering, but remained committed to her first band, Star Killers (later renamed Forrister), a dream-pop vehicle for her revealing songs. When her bandmates couldn't make a free recording session in Richmond, Virginia, Baker made *Sprained Ankle* alone – and won a record deal.

After a very rough ride, Baker feels she's finally getting to a better place. "One lyric that didn't make *Little Oblivions*, because the song didn't fit, is, 'I wanted so bad to be good when there is no such thing.' That," she says, "was a very freeing thought for me to start to believe."

Martin Aston

Little Oblivions is released on February 26 on Matador.

FACT SHEET

- For fans of Pedro The Lion, Dashboard Confessional, Melanie.
- Baker used to wear a T-shirt that read Sad Songs Made Me Feel Better, "but I feel like I unwittingly put an 'I am sad' tattoo on my forehead and cheapened the expression. But I do love wallowing in sad music. Especially The Japanese House [AKA British solo artist Amber Bain]."
- Baker's first tattoo announced God Exists. She's added several more, including Love Is The Only Way Out, a lyric from another of her favourite bands, Every Time I Die.
- Amid global turmoil, Baker feels "a bit gross writing about personal instability", but won't stop. "I adore bands that scream instructions, like 'Burn your TV!', but I have to sift stuff through my experience to feel comfortable sharing it."

KEY TRACKS

- Claws In Your Back
- Everybody Does
- Faith Healer

THE AFROBEAT DYNASTY CONTINUES WITH MADE KUTI

"IF YOU MAKE music, do it in a way that hasn't been done before." Made Anikulapo Kuti takes a moment to consider what he learnt at college, London's Trinity Laban. "You will be criticised more for doing something well that already exists than you will be for doing something terribly if it has never been done before."

At 25, Made (pronounced Mah-dy) has an enviable pedigree. His grandfather, Fela, was the creator of Afrobeat whose politically-charged songs made him Nigeria's Public Enemy Number 1 in the 1970s. His father, Femi, followed in the family business, standing in for Fela when legal woes prevented touring.

"I was only two when Fela died, so I have no memories of him, just stories. I know he had a sweet tooth and used to give us lots of sweets, and he came to my naming ceremony, but at that point he was too sick to come in, and he stayed in his taxi."

Although he studied at Trinity – "I was surprised how far Afrobeat music had spread: I didn't think the head of composition at a conservatoire would be a Fela fan" – Kuti points to lessons he learnt at home, The Shrine in Lagos, as being his most important influence. The club and compound owned by the Kutis, it became the family residence for security reasons, and there, four nights a week, he would see his father lead his group, Positive Force, through a show heaving with consciousness-raising politics and heavy funk.

Since 2018, Made Kuti has been part of that band, but 2021 will see Made and Femi release *Legacy+*, a joint double long-player. Made's half, *For(e)ward*, sees him play all the instruments.

> "Fela used to give us lots of sweets."
> MADE KUTI

"It wasn't the plan. I was just practising a lot because I wanted to be better at everything I sort of knew – trumpet, bass, piano, drums… guitar was the hardest. Then I just thought, Yeah, I can do this. It became a challenge. And they are very different albums. Dad was very strict, in a positive way: 'You can't be me, you can't be Fela, be yourself.'"

Made also plays percussion and bass on his father's tracks. So will he make more in royalties than his father? "That's a good point, I'd never thought of that. I should. I'll need to run that by him. You may have created the first quarrel between father and son."

David Hutcheon

Made Kuti's For(e)ward, and Femi Kuti's Stop The Hate, will be released as the Legacy+ double album on Partisan on February 5.

FACT SHEET

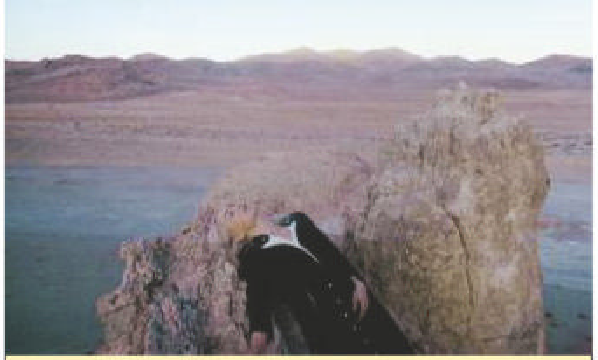
- For fans of Fela, Femi and Seun Kuti, Tony Allen, Antibalas, Manu Dibango
- Fela studied music at Trinity 60 years ago (his parents had sent him to London to learn medicine) and spent his nights playing jazz in Soho. Made claims he was too busy practising to live "the underground jazz experience".
- Made's first musical passion was J-Rock and recommends The Black Horn, Gackt and Uverworld. Unable to understand the lyrics, he started learning Japanese.
- It was his Japanese teacher who turned him on to jazz, with a Best Of by Miles Davis and John Coltrane.

KEY TRACKS

- Free Your Mind
- Young Lady
- Different Streets

Made Kuti: it's a family affair.

MOJO PLAYLIST



Let's shimmy! To riffs, breaks and neo-prog.

1 PHOEBE BRIDGERS IF WE MAKE IT THROUGH DECEMBER
With all proceeds to LA's Downtown Women's Centre, Merle Haggard's original becomes a ballad for empathic voice and piano.
Find it: *Bandcamp*

2 BOBBY LEE JOIN ME IN LA BOOGIE
From the Bandcamp badlands: overdriven drum machine, low-slung chooglé, and the arrival of a Sheffield JJ Cale. The whole *Shakedown In Slabtown* album is magic.
Find it: *Bandcamp*

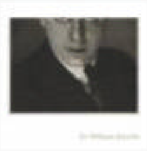
3 THE AMORPHOUS ANDROGYNOUS & PETER HAMMILL WE PERSUADE OURSELVES WE ARE IMMORTAL
A six-part 41-minute "progtronic symphony" on eternal life: Weller on guitar and keys, sax by Caravan's Brian Hopper, and more!
Find it: *fsoldigital.com*

4 MATT SWEENEY & BONNIE 'PRINCE' BILLY MAKE WORRY FOR ME
Lock up your lambs as the Superwolves return, badder and meaner with "hideous demons" and an excellent creepy guitar riff.
Find it: *Streaming services*

5 PALE BLUE EYES MOTIONLESS
Anything but static, as new Devon dreampop trio ride a shimmering Krautrail to Asgard. Made with help from an eco-funeral directors.
Find it: *Bandcamp*

6 ALTERN 8 HARD CREW (THE REINST8 MIX)
It's Vicks o'clock with the Stafford rave nutters' first tune since 1993: feel the robo stabs, giant breaks and proper "brown sound" bass.
Find it: *Bandcamp*

7 HANNAH GEORGAS AND MATT BERNINGER PRAY IT AWAY
From her Aaron Dessner-produced album, the song – about conflicting family ideologies – sounds precise and intimate.
Find it: *Streaming services*



8 LE VOLUME COURBE MIND CONTORTED
The High Flying Birds' scissors player covers Daniel Johnston, beatifically, in duet with Terry Hall, and with N Gallagher on guitar.
Find it: *Fourteen Years EP (Honest Jons)*

9 THE SUBLIMINALS UNITED STATE
Title-track from 20th anniversary reissue of the sole LP by Kiwi post-punks: taut, with killer bee bass line that begs strobe lighting.
Find it: *Flying Nun YouTube*

10 SOULWAX NY LIPPS (DRIES VAN NOTEN 2020 REWORK)
From the reissued *Nite Versions* LP, a fashion-show re-rub under the influence of Oscar Wilde, Funky Town and the Human League's *Love And Dancing*.
Find it: *SoundCloud*

Optimus Dammy, Olof Grind

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MOJO
JOHN LENNON
1980

THE MOJO INTERVIEW

With riffs like **blows on Vulcan's anvil** he forged ground-breaking **heavy rock** – but leading **Black Sabbath** presented more **demanding dilemmas**. "It was like **most workplaces**," says Tony Iommi; "if someone **leaves**, you don't close the **whole factory** down."

Interview by **PHIL ALEXANDER** • Portrait by **ROSS HALFIN**

"I WAS MEANT TO BE IN THE STUDIO LAST week and then things all went a bit pear-shaped," says Tony Iommi. Just like everyone else, the Black Sabbath guitarist has been navigating the pandemic in the best way he can. "It really is mad," he says of a world plunged into chaos worthy of a Sabbath lyric. "Sometimes you do wonder what's going to happen next."

Dividing his time between homes in the Midlands and Dorset while his band's business ticks over in the shape of deluxe reissues of second album *Paranoid* this past October and 1972's *Volume 4* this coming February, Iommi has been working on new music, revisiting a stockpile of riffs untapped since his pioneering, intermittently notorious group decided to call it a day in 2017.

For Black Sabbath, that final run brought to an end a story that began in the backstreets of Aston, Birmingham, in 1968, where Iommi, drummer Bill Ward, bass player Geezer Butler and frontman Ozzy Osbourne first threw in their lots together in a bid for a life less ordinary. Due to managerial machinations, Ward was absent for the band's last studio album, *13* (Number 1 in the UK and US upon release in 2013), and the ensuing world tour.

Iommi, meanwhile, dealt with the recording of the album and the subsequent trek as he battled cancer, having been diagnosed with lymphoma in 2012. It was, says the 72-year-old of his treatment, "quite difficult to deal with at times."

Iommi's characteristic stoicism and determination were forged aged 17, when he lost the tips of his middle and ring fingers on his right hand in a sheet metal accident [see MOJO 235]. Unwilling to give up on a career in music, he switched to playing guitar left-handed and captained Sabbath through the next five decades of dramatic escapades, embracing highs (including Olympian levels of intoxication) and lows (including the moment Sabbath strode on-stage beneath a miniature version of Stonehenge with Ian Gillan as their singer) and thrilling music that articulated horror both real and theatrical, at frequencies low enough to rearrange human cell structures. Iommi is one of few musicians arguably responsible for spawning an entire genre – in his case, heavy metal – but you won't hear such claims from *him*. "I'm not a very technical player," he tells MOJO today. "What I do is quite simple compared to other people."

Iommi's ability to invent monolithic riffs has sustained his group and inspired acolytes across a range of rock styles, from psych to metal, grunge to drone. Yet as we head back to the man's childhood in Park Lane, Aston, the only son of Italian Catholic parents, we find his musical journey had an unlikely start.

WE'RE NOT WORTHY

Earth's drone king **Dylan Carlson** gives thanks for the don of heavy.

Joshua Ford

"I totally admire Tony for becoming an amazing player despite the challenges he faced, and for doing music his way. He wrote some of the best riffs in the history of rock, and his solos were incredibly cool and melodic – he was always pushing the envelope. I wouldn't have a career without him!"

Your first instrument wasn't a guitar was it?

No, it was the accordion. My family in general – my father, relations and whatnot – played accordion and drums, with a bit of piano, so I just ended up playing it. I wasn't mad about it but I did keep that accordion for years. In fact, I got rid of the ➢

original one and then went and bought another one, as silly as that seems! I played that one for about a week and then never touched it again.

So what was the first piece of music that turned you on to guitar?

Rock'n'roll stuff initially. Chuck Berry and people like that. But The Shadows were a huge influence – largely because they were an instrumental band so you could learn those tunes easily. It was harder with Chuck Berry because you had to be able to sing too. With The Shadows you could just concentrate on the guitar.

As a teenager was the guitar an escape?

It probably was an escape at the time and it was something that I could focus my mind on. I went to judo lessons and karate lessons when I was young and that kept me focused and I was really into that. As soon as I started playing, the guitar just took over. In those days you weren't really allowed out much or you'd join a gang, and that wasn't for me, so it led to me sitting alone in my room and learning the guitar and learning songs I'd hear on the radio.

What other music did you gravitate towards?

It was a mixture of stuff. When I made my first appearance I was too young to even drink in a pub but we played in a pub garden. I'd never played in front of anybody at that point so it was quite nerve-wracking. That was my first appearance with that band and my last because they were all a lot older than me. Soon afterwards I joined a band with Bill Ward. We started playing Shadows tunes, more rock'n'roll and Top 20 stuff. You just had to know those Top 20 tunes or you wouldn't get a gig. We'd play Otis Redding songs, a bit of Buddy Holly and whatever was popular. I have to say that I can't actually remember what was even in the Top 20 at that time. Did I learn anything from it? Probably.

All four members of Sabbath grew up near each other in Aston. You came together to form Earth – but it was almost by default.

That's true. It was really strange, the way in which we got together. Bill and I were in a band, The Rest – a Birmingham band. Then I moved up to Carlisle to join this other band [Mythology] and I got Bill in. When that band split we came back and started looking for a singer. We'd seen Geezer floating about. He was in this other band [Rare Breed] that used to play this all-nighter club where Bill and I also played. To us, Geezer was a right freak, doing his acid or whatever and climbing the walls. I used to see him walking past my mum's shop in Aston because he dated a girl who lived up the road, so that was as far as we knew each other.

Then one day Ozzy and Geezer came round to my house looking for a drummer. I said to them, "Bill's a drummer." But Bill said: "I don't want to play with them, I want to do something with you." I said, "Why don't we have a go together?" and it went from there. We ended up rehearsing in a garden or somewhere. Geezer had never played bass in his life. He had a Telecaster that he'd tuned down to play bass. Me and Bill had come from a band that was quite good and we looked at each other after that rehearsal and said, "What are we doing? Nobody knows what they're doing here!" But it was amazing how quickly it actually did come together after that, and how quickly Geezer picked up the bass.

You left Earth in late '68 to join Jethro Tull for a few weeks and lasted long enough to appear with them in The Rolling Stones Rock'n'Roll Circus alongside Clapton, Lennon, Marianne Faithfull *et al*. What was that experience like?

It was a bit daunting, frightening but exciting. I'd seen all these people on TV but obviously I'd never met them so I was thrown into the deep end. Not having my band around me was weird because I didn't know the guys in Jethro Tull that well. Before we did the show the Stones had a reception at a hotel in London and they were playing, and all the people in the film were there. Good God! I was like a fish out of water. I'll always remember Marianne Faithfull coming over and saying, "Oh, don't worry, everything will be all right," because she could obviously see that I was shitting myself! She was very nice, the one who got me to relax.

As we rehearsed [with Tull] and we had a couple of days doing the movie, I got to know people. We were sharing a dressing room with The Who. I slowly started to feel like I was part of something and, looking back, it was a pretty fantastic experience.

You decided that Tull was not for you but you learned the art of discipline from your time with them, didn't you?

That's right. I'd been around a band that was very different but knew what they needed to do. I saw that, learnt from that, and Geezer saw that too, because he came down to rehearsals. When we got back together it was clear that we really needed to take things seriously in order to make things work, so we did.

Earth changed their name to Black Sabbath at the point when you wrote the song of the same name. How did it come to you?

You know what, it's hard to explain. Geezer and myself were playing around just making a noise really and that riff just came out. It just came together and I'm not sure we knew what was happening. It was almost as if something had been pushed into your hand at that point. We knew that song was completely different from what was out there and nothing sounded like it. It gave us an incredible feeling. We thought, "We love this!" It made the hairs on your arms stand up and we said, "That's it! That's where we want to be, that's where we're going."

Is Sabbath's wall of sound based on you and Geezer interlocking – essentially playing the same riff?

A LIFE IN PICTURES

Keeping the Sabbath: Images of Iommi.

1 Accordion times: young Iommi squeezes in the back yard at Park Lane, Aston.

2 Brum beat: Tony (back row second from right) with his first 'proper' group The Rockin' Chevrolets, 1964.

3 Riffing in the past: Iommi with Ian Anderson of Jethro Tull on The Rolling Stones Rock And Roll Circus, Wembley, December 11, 1968.

4 Let the games begin: Black Sabbath (from left) Iommi, Ozzy Osbourne, Geezer Butler, Bill Ward. "It was as if something had been pushed into your hand".

5 Iommi with Ronnie James Dio, 1985. "He brought freshness."

6 "What a moment that was!" (from left) Butler, Ian Gillan and Iommi, Long Beach, CA, 1984. Sabs journey to Stonehenge.

7 Never say die! (from left) Tony, Ozzy and Geezer after receiving Black Sabbath's Grammy, Los Angeles, January 26, 2014.

8 Bowing out: (from left) drummer Tony Clufetos, Butler, Osbourne and Iommi on Sabbath's The End tour, Wantagh, NY, August 17, 2016.

9 "I'm still just trying to make music that I like. It's how it's been since day one": Tony Iommi, master of reality.

THE ROCKIN' CHEVROLETS ARE HERE

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Courtesy Tony Iommi (2), Avalon (2), Getty (4), Shutterstock

Yeah. It's the combination of everybody, of course, but the combination of Geezer and myself in particular because he would solidify the riff – whether he was playing the same riff or playing an accompaniment by bending the strings in a way that would make the riff fatter. Both of us developed this approach to bending the strings to make the sound fuller and that became our sound.

The band's first album famously took one day to record. During the sessions you had to switch from playing a Fender Stratocaster to a Gibson SG – a guitar that has come to define you. How important is the SG to your sound?

Pretty important. We'd just finished recording Wicked World, the first track for the album, when the pick-up on my Strat went. I shat myself because it was my main guitar. I couldn't pull the Strat to bits to rebuild because we only had a day in the studio so I had to use the SG.

Originally, I'd had a right-handed SG and I swapped it in a car park for a left-handed SG with a guy I didn't know from Adam! (*laughs*) That was quite weird, I suppose. I'd never really played the SG because I was so used to the Strat but I took it with me to the studio and when the Strat went I had to use it. Of course, I was right in the deep end again, recording our first album with a guitar I'd never really played. But I never looked back or went back to the Strat after that.

You were raised a Catholic. So how did your parents react when the first album came out and you had a huge inverted cross on the inside of the gatefold sleeve and all the occult connotations?

Oh, God! In all honesty I think the one who had the hardest job was Geezer because his family were staunch Catholics. As far as my parents were concerned it was more of a case of, "When are you going to get a proper job?" I think when the first record came out it was *still* a case of, "Oh, my God, you've made a record… Now when are you going to get a proper job?" (*laughs*) To be fair, my mum did help us a lot. She helped sign for our first van. And when the first album came out they were obviously proud but they never really let on.

The critics hated Sabbath from day one, and your music was labelled 'heavy metal'. How did you feel about that term?

> **"We always felt there** was a fifth member – **this presence** when we were all together."

It never existed in my mind for many years. I didn't understand it and I didn't really care for labels anyway. If I was going to define what we did back then, I would've classed us as a heavy rock band. I never really accepted the term 'heavy metal' to be honest, none of us did. In the end it didn't really matter. It became a simple way of describing what we do. As far as we were concerned, we just liked what we were doing. We weren't trying to follow any kind of path that had been laid for us because there was nothing there that sounded like that before us. We started writing this stuff and it just seemed to come out of the air somehow, you know.

A lot of musicians talk about not feeling in control of the creative process. Is that how you were feeling?

We always felt within the band that there was a fifth member. It sounds ridiculous now, but we always felt that there was somebody over-looking us and guiding us. We felt this presence when we were all together. It was one of those things we'd refer to as being the over-self, or the fifth member, looking out for us. We were so close as a band, we lived in each other's pockets from the start, that we became as one. This fifth member seemed very real and there to us.

Things always seemed to happen to us that were quite weird. We'd be in the van, for example, and one of us would look out the window and go, "Oh look, there's a fish and chip shop over there," and just as we'd say that, the lights would go out in the shop. There were just always strange things happening to us back then.

Weirdness aside, how do you view the musical development of the band between the first album and *Vol. 4*?

The press weren't big fans, so the only way we could get to people was to go out and play. When we started releasing albums, that changed – especially when we released the *Paranoid* album [September 1970] and we went to America. People started to accept us properly there and we went from there. The shows got bigger and we became a better band. We became closer and tighter. In terms of our playing, it was that simple.

***Vol. 4* was when your cocaine madness set in.**

Yeah. But it was also a great time for us, really. We were in our own little bubble. We rented [paint empire mogul] John du Pont's house in LA and we had the time of our lives. We rehearsed there and wrote the album there. We were getting drugs and stuff brought

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> “**Don Arden** said, ‘**You can’t have a midget fronting Black Sabbath!**’ He wasn’t having it.”

< in, and it was just a great time. The problem with it was we tried to recreate the same situation for the next album, *Sabbath Bloody Sabbath*, and it didn’t work at all.

You went from smoking weed in 1969 to taking cocaine in 1973. Did that excess lead to the split of the original line-up?

Well, we went through a great, jolly period at first and I didn’t start taking coke until much later, really. *Vol. 4* was probably the height of it all, though, and after that things didn’t feel quite the same. I loved *Sabbath Bloody Sabbath* but after that I think we struggled. The drug thing around the later period with Ozzy sort of took over. We went through a bad stage pretty much until we got Ronnie [James Dio] in the band. I think we all lost track of things. I know Ozzy suffered. He didn’t feel right with things any more, and neither did anyone else.

Do you think the tales of excess mask the personal cost that came with being in Black Sabbath?

Yeah. There was nobody there to tell us not to do drugs. Everybody and their brother was doing coke, especially in America. I won’t mention any names, but you’d meet people who were high up in government and stuff and you’d find out that they were doing coke. Bloody hell! It just became this thing suddenly. It was almost like going out to the pub. At the end of the day, there was a downside and it affected us all.

In April ’79 Ozzy was fired and Sabbath continued with Ronnie James Dio. What did he bring to the band?

He brought a lot, a freshness for starters. And it was the same for Ozzy too. He had a fresh start and he had to get himself together. With us, with Ronnie, it made us work. He was a fresh voice and it was exciting again. We’d reached where we were going to reach with that [original] line-up at that time. That last tour we did [for 1978’s *Never Say Die!*] was when we had Van Halen opening for us and, if I’m honest really, we were old hat by then compared to them.

You were very generous to Van Halen on that tour. Most headliners would’ve felt threatened.

They were just great, such an energetic band. They’d go on and jump around, do somersaults and all that stuff, and then we’d come on and (*sings a doomy Sabbath-style riff*) and bring the whole place down! (*laughs*) But we’d reached where we’d reached and we’d lost something on the way. We had to do something because we were either going to break up or Ozzy was going to leave and we’d get a new singer in and do something slightly different. If we hadn’t done that, we’d have been finished and I didn’t think we should finish. When Ronnie came on board we had something to prove again. It wasn’t just handed to us on a plate any more. Of course, at the time, we had Don Arden managing us and he was really against us getting Ronnie

"We went through a great, jolly period at first. There was nobody there to tell us not to do drugs": Tony Iommi on Black Sabbath's drug heaven and hell.

Ross Halfin

in the band, so that made it even more difficult.

Why was that?

He turned round and said, "You can't have a midget fronting Black Sabbath!" Those were his words. He wasn't having it and told us we were going to get Ozzy back. That was when we basically split from him over that whole situation.

Between 1980 and 1982 you released two studio albums with Ronnie, *Heaven And Hell* and *Mob Rules* – records that some people describe as their favourite Sabbath albums. How do you feel about them?

I almost want to agree with those people. The first period of Sabbath was great and what we did is set in stone, but when we did *Heaven And Hell*, I just really loved that record. I loved *Mob Rules* too. I loved the energy we've got on those albums. The way Ronnie put things over gave us a kick up the arse too. We were able to sit down together properly and put ideas together. The way his voice sounded was great. I loved that whole period. It was frightening and exciting at the same time because everyone seemed against us. Everyone kept on saying, "You can't do this, it's never going to happen without Ozzy," but we liked what we'd got and we were right about that too.

Dio left in late '82 after a clash of egos during the mixing of *Live Evil* album. Ian Gillan joined for the *Born Again* album, which led to the Stonehenge moment…

And what a moment that was! (*laughs*) You would never have thought that Ian would end up in the band and he didn't remember very much about joining the band either! The priceless moment was when his manager rang him up and said, "Ian, if you're going to make managerial decisions, could you let me know?" It was quite a strange time, I suppose.

After that there were endless Sabs' line-up changes with ex-band members leaving and then re-joining. It almost turned into a soap opera, didn't it?

I suppose so, especially looking at it now. But at the time all I wanted to do was play and have a band that worked. So every time someone left, I'd bring someone new in. It was the same as most workplaces: if someone leaves, you don't just close the whole factory down, you get somebody else in. That's how I looked at it and, yes, it wasn't the same as the original line-up because it couldn't be. But you brought new people in, not to replace the others, but just to carry on.

DARK VICTORIES

Three monsters from Iommi's riff pit, by **Danny Eccleston.**

THE EPIPHANY

Black Sabbath

★★★★★

Paranoid

(VERTIGO, 1970)

Sabbath's second album crystallises the unholy trinity of bassist Geezer Butler's gothic lyrics, Ozzy Osbourne's lost-soul bleat and Iommi's unique guitarchitecture: megalithic, with rococo flourishes (Bill Ward's not bad, either). War Pigs is heavy rock with a heavy conscience; Paranoid still their greatest feat of pure songwriting; Iron Man a genius symbiosis of sound and subject matter; Hand Of Doom the declaration of a band with multiple gears.

THE ASCENSION

Black Sabbath

★★★★★

Vol 4

(VERTIGO, 1972)

Eighteen months on tour and what Butler reckoned was $75,000 spent on cocaine left Sabbath deranged, but if their USP *wasn't* channelling madness, what was it? Wheels Of Confusion is a kaleidoscope of wonders and terrors. Supernaut may be Iommi's greatest ever riff, the solo his most intense. Then there are the splashes of colour on the Stygian canvas: Changes' poignant gospel-soul and Iommi's acoustic showcase, Laguna Sunrise, an idyll more Campania than Orange County.

THE RESURRECTION

Black Sabbath

★★★★

Heaven And Hell

(VERTIGO, 1980)

The departure of Osbourne boded ill (to say nothing of Ward and Butler's trials), but the determination of Iommi, the energy and vocal chops of Ronnie James Dio and a gleaming production overhaul by Martin Birch reset them for the long haul. Neon Knights, Wishing Well and Die Young are thrilling, Iommi's guitar parts alternately gritty and lyrically echo-laden. In a watershed year for metal, Iommi had hauled his band onto the right side of the divide.

Much has been made of the bad blood between you and the original band members down the years. And yet, having stood in a room with all four of you, you almost seem like the same four people you were back in '69.

You're exactly right. That is exactly it. When we got together to do the last album [2013's *13*] and Bill was on board originally, we were rehearsing at my house and then Ozzy's house, and it was just like old times. The banter was there and we were playing up and doing all the things we'd always done. We were all one again, and then of course it all didn't happen because it's such a complicated situation. Things always get more complicated in that way.

Bill didn't re-join the band at that time, and you played your final shows in 2017 without him. Did it feel right to end Sabbath then?

Basically, it was probably my fault. We were having late nights and flying all the time. I can't complain about that because we had great hotels and the best of everything, but it was making me tired and when I spoke to my cancer professor he said, "You shouldn't be doing this to this extent." I started to worry constantly. I felt I had to draw the line somewhere because we couldn't tour forever and then start writing a new album to tour again. We were getting to that age where it was just too much. I loved being with the band and doing gigs but I hated the loneliness of the rest of it. When you get to the hotel and you've got a day off, you don't know what to do because sometimes you just can't go out because there are fans around or you just don't feel like going out. It's easy to get locked into your own little world.

You're writing new music now. What does it sound like?

Shit! (*laughs*) There's so much stuff that I've got that I want to put down. We've got eight songs that we want to get drums on because they're programmed drums at the moment… but things have got in the way (*laughs*). And I've got hundreds of other riffs that I like so I want to do something with them.

Black Sabbath is over, so will this become a solo project?

I don't know. I will need a singer but I don't know where we'll go from here or who we're going to use or what to do other than get the musical side together. Mainly I've been doing it for my own peace of mind, to see what things sound like. They are quite different songs, some may need orchestration. They might suit different vocalists but we'll see, because, honestly, I feel a bit lost right now with it all.

Finally, what is there left to accomplish for Tony Iommi?

I don't really know what's left to do. I play because I enjoy it and I can do things when I like. I don't have to work towards getting a tour together or anything. I'm not trying to take the world by storm. I'm still just trying to make music that I like. It's how it's been since day one.

Black Sabbath's Paranoid 50th Anniversary Super Deluxe Edition is out now on Sanctuary Records. Vol. 4 package follows on February 12, 2021.

“It’s Hard To Separate Myself From My Family”

The father who towered over showbiz; the brother whose kidnap shocked America; the daughters devoted to her legacy: it’d be easy for **NANCY SINATRA** to take a back seat to her kin. Yet the quirky pop she made with Lee Hazlewood and others imparts a deathless dazzle and, at 80, she’s in little doubt about its value. “We made some damn good records,” she reminds **DAVE DiMARTINO**.

Photograph: **RON JOY**

THE WOMAN SITTING OPPOSITE MOJO MAY BE AS CLOSE AS IT GETS to being full-fledged, USA pop royalty. She is answering a question she has been asked ever since, at age 19, she helped welcome Elvis Presley back to the USA at McGuire Air Force Base, New Jersey, on his way to discharge from the army in 1960. Then after she released her first pop single on Reprise Records, her father Frank’s label, in 1961. And after she released the hit song in 1965 that would shape the remainder of her career.

The song was These Boots Are Made For Walkin’. The woman is Nancy Sinatra. And the inevitable question is whether her success was largely a matter of luck, or genetics.

“Well, you know, hopefully it’s in my DNA,” she says. “I kind of think I took the ball and ran with it. I don’t think that it was entirely luck, you know?”

She is now 80 years old, warm, friendly, still striking, and, as the expression has it, sharp as a tack. We are sitting across from each other, at a small card table set up in her Beverly Hills-adjacent office in Los Angeles this October afternoon, to discuss the career that is being commemorated via *Start Walkin’*, the new Light In The Attic compilation that will launch a year-long Nancy Sinatra promotional campaign. At this very moment she is looking down at printed pages bearing the album’s tracklist, and she likes it.

“Just looking at this list, which I haven’t really spent a lot of time with,” she says, “I’m very impressed. You know, I really am. And we made some damn good records.”

Who would disagree?

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Ron Joy ©Boots Enterprises, Inc.

NANCY SINATRA HAD IT ALL: SHE WAS A ROCK goddess with hits galore, an audience spanning multiple generations, a sultry look that captivated men and women alike, and a maker of some of the finest pop singles of the era. The latter came via her celebrated producer and duet partner Barton Lee Hazlewood – who, whether as writer, producer or sonic visionary, played a vital part in Sinatra's best recordings. Together, there really was no one like Nancy & Lee, and their recordings – These Boots…, Sugar Town, How Does That Grab You, Darlin'?, the extraordinary Some Velvet Morning among the highlights – had a sound that, despite a half-century of cover versions, has never been replicated.

Born in Jersey City, New Jersey, the eldest of three siblings including Frank Jr and sister Tina, Sinatra made her move to California when father Frank's Hollywood career began booming. She went to public high school and had a brief bit of college before leaving "to get married too young", as she says, to singer/actor Tommy Sands, a union lasting five years. But before all that, she had to figure out who she wanted to be.

"I made a half-assed attempt to become a professional," she says of those early days. "I took dancing lessons and vocal study – although I took the vocal part of it very seriously, because my dad's example was so graphic. The absolute devotion to his work was catching, kind of, and part of it was trying to live up to his standards. It's hard to separate myself from my family."

Did her parents push her in any direction in particular?

"Well, I studied music all my life, OK? I studied classical piano. My brother retained the knowledge and used it brilliantly, most of his life. I lost it somewhere in my late twenties and early thirties – which is when I started really recording. It's funny. I have a piano in my apartment and I look at it every now and then, and I wish I could remember my Debussy and my Mendelssohn. I wish my fingers were self-educated enough to do it without me, right?"

"My dad was sitting in the other room. And when Lee left, he said, 'It's the one about the boots.'"

Nancy Sinatra

Still, Sinatra's talents landed her a deal in 1961 with her father's then-fledgling Reprise Records. Her first single, Cuff Links And A Tie Clip, produced by Tutti Camarata – producer of contemporary teen star Annette Funicello and others on the Disneyland Records roster – failed to take off, as did several follow-ups. Something needed to happen, and something eventually did.

CUFF LINKS AND A TIE CLIP
NOT JUST YOUR FRIEND
R-20,017
nancy sinatra
reprise
Some Velvet Morning
Nancy Sinatra
& Lee
Hazlewood
RA 0651
Nancy Sinatra
START WALKIN' 1965-1976

"If we could blame or credit anybody, it was Jimmy Bowen, who was head of A&R at Reprise," Sinatra notes. "And they were about ready to drop me from the label. I mean, just because my dad owned it did not mean that I was going to stay on the label if I didn't pay my own way. And I was barely paying my own way with those early Tutti Camarata-type recordings. Jimmy Bowen was searching. It took him quite a while. He was searching for an idea for me, because he actually produced a couple of sessions for me. We did some good records, and we bridged the gap between bubblegum and Barton."

Most memorable for her was 1965's True Love, a Cole Porter song from High Society. "We did it with a rhythm feel (*pounds out a beat with her hands on the table*) and we changed it. And the recording was good. It was real good, but it didn't have the magic that Jimmy was looking for."

That magic would arrive with an introduction to Lee Hazlewood – who had already enjoyed significant success with Duane Eddy, and recorded a number of duets with Suzi Jane Hokom, his lover and soon-to-be colleague at his LHI label, which enjoyed a colourful, fascinating, and commercially unsuccessful run from 1966-71.

If These Boots Are Made For Walkin' effectively launched Nancy Sinatra into the pop stratosphere – or at least made her a Famous Face Of The Swinging '60s – one must offer some credit to her father, who was visiting when Lee Hazlewood first came by to audition his material for Nancy, and who laid low for the duration. "He was sitting in the other room eavesdropping," she says. "And when Lee left, he said, 'It's the one about the boots.'"

But it took a minute. First there was So Long Babe, a 1965 single produced and written by Hazlewood, and – equally important – arranged by Billy Strange, guitarist, songwriter, and part of LA's storied Wrecking Crew session team. Not a hit, but maybe just enough.

"I recorded it and I did it on some of the teen-type TV shows," Sinatra recalls. "I can't even think of the name of it – Shindig! or Hullabaloo. It was enough to make people interested, I guess, and choreographers interested. It actually made the Billboard or Cashbox chart. I mean, way down like Number 99 out of 100, but it was enough for Reprise to warrant another try. So I was lucky I got the right song, or opened the door. Now we had to sort of break through. And that's where Boots came in."

RELEASED IN DECEMBER 1965, THESE BOOTS ARE Made For Walkin' stomped into the charts all over the world and had such a profound impact on popular musical culture that it would eventually be covered by Loretta Lynn, KMFDM, Geri Halliwell, Megadeth, the Beau Brummels, Wayne Newton, Amanda Lear, Jessica Simpson, The Fixx, David Byrne, even Frank Sinatra himself, among hundreds of others. But there is no better version of Boots than the one sung by Nancy Sinatra and crafted by her team.

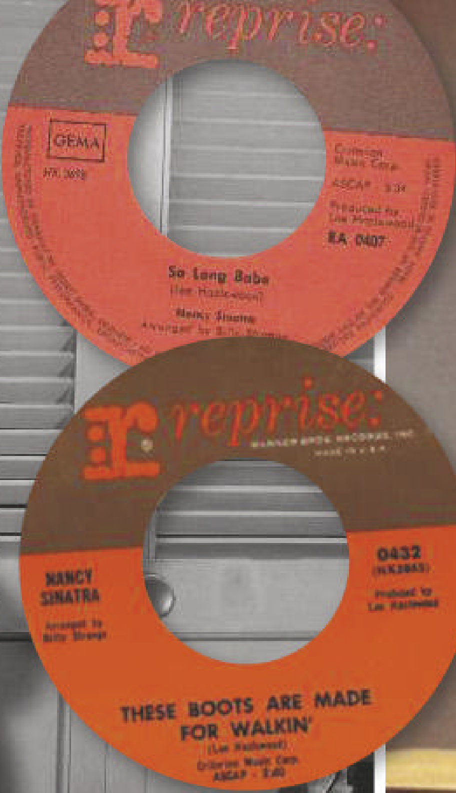
"I was surrounded by very talented musicians and grateful to be," she tells MOJO today. "I mean, I was born into that, and I just moved into another chapter of it, really. People like Hal Blaine and Don Randi and Glen Campbell, and a guitarist named Donnie Owens who was a friend of Lee's, who helped created the 'dumb' sound that Lee used to treasure – 'dumb' not meaning stupid, but *universal*. It was a *chunka, chunka, chunka* kind of thing. And I can just picture the row of guitar players, still."

Although their macho moniker is abhorred to this day by their bassist Carol Kaye, the Wrecking Crew never failed to bring something to their Nancy dates – not least, Billy Strange's sophisticated horn arrangements

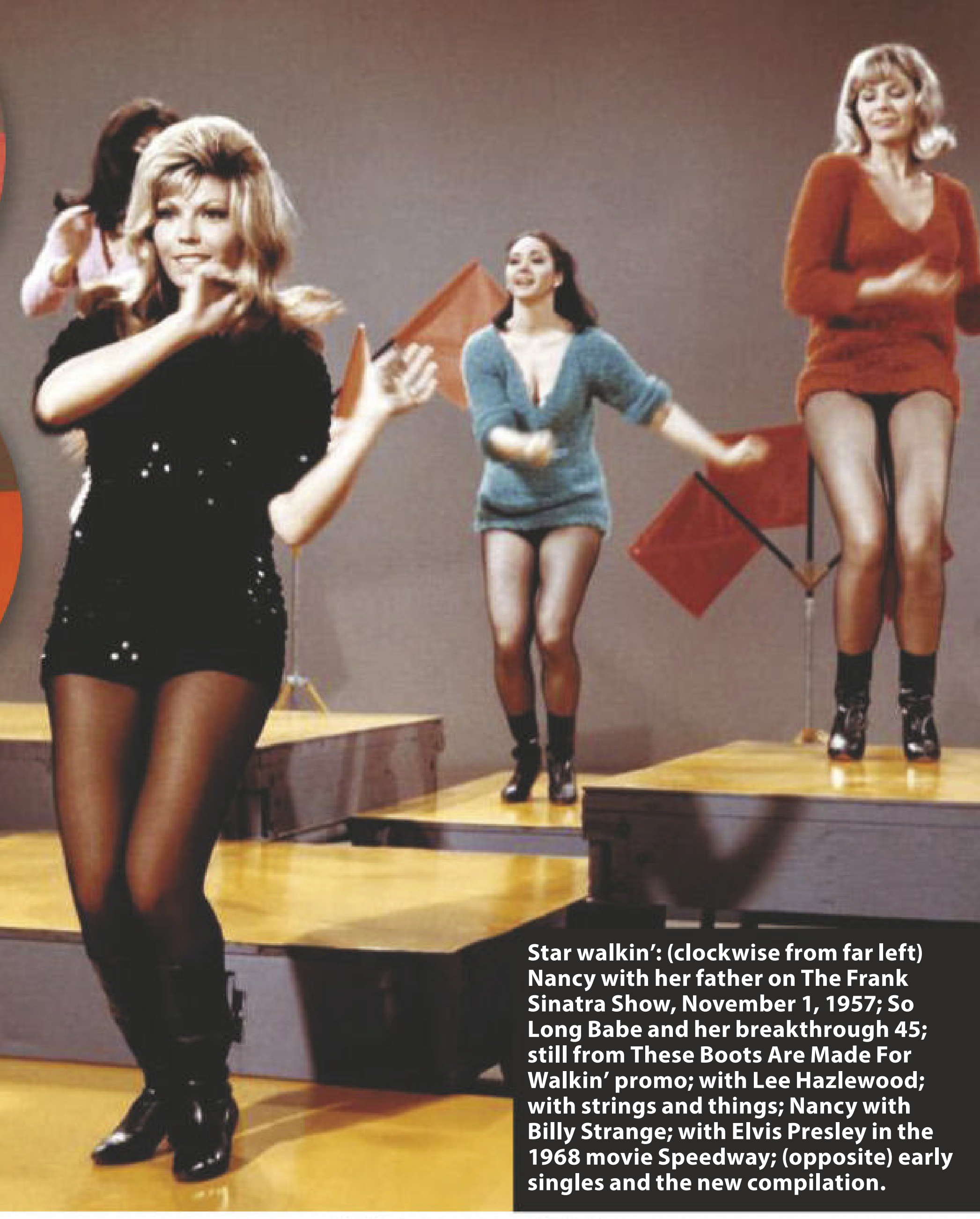
"Everything was fresh," says Sinatra. "Everything was approached from a new point of view at every session. And sometimes they just slept on the floor because they were working so much. The horns were a very important part of those songs, musically. Stevie Van Zandt asked me to do a couple of his rock shows because he loved the horns. And so I had to perform those in his shows with a horn section. I guess Billy brought that into our country-rock songs…" Sinatra laughs. "But I guess he kind of stole it from Herb Alpert."

Lee Hazlewood's role was key. Despite his louche look, he was no sinister svengali; he was a skilled singer, a unique, aggressively strange songwriter, and an astute, if sometimes crude advisor for Sinatra ("Sing like a 14-year-old girl who fucks truck drivers," he infamously instructed her early on). His value to their partnership is clear in the songwriting credits on LITA's compilation; he wrote more than half of the tracks and produced nearly all the rest. ➢

Photo by Ron Joy ©Boots Enterprises, Inc. (2), Photo by Paul Ferrara ©Boots Enterprises, Inc., Getty



reprise:
GEMA
So Long Babe
(Lee Hazlewood)
Nancy Sinatra
Criterion Music Corp.
ASCAP
Produced by Lee Hazlewood
RA 0407
reprise:
NANCY SINATRA
Arranged by Billy Strange
0432
Produced by Lee Hazlewood
THESE BOOTS ARE MADE FOR WALKIN'
(Lee Hazlewood)
Criterion Music Corp.
ASCAP · 2:40



Star walkin': (clockwise from far left) Nancy with her father on The Frank Sinatra Show, November 1, 1957; So Long Babe and her breakthrough 45; still from These Boots Are Made For Walkin' promo; with Lee Hazlewood; with strings and things; Nancy with Billy Strange; with Elvis Presley in the 1968 movie Speedway; (opposite) early singles and the new compilation.

"When Lee was producing, he was writing," says Sinatra. "It was rare when he would bring in something that was not one of his. That became a problem for us later on, because there were great songs coming to us, but he kind of pooh-poohed everything, unless it was Bob Dylan or somebody like that. He was a difficult taskmaster."

Which is not to say Hazlewood's own material was lacking:

"There wasn't much to say no to, to be honest. The formula was there, and the songs that he wrote fit into that so beautifully. They became more sophisticated with arrangements. So that's the difference. That's the key. Some Velvet Morning, for example – when he played it on his guitar, he did the time change, the 2/4 and the 3/4 and back, and so forth. He did all of that, but he would then say to Billy Strange, 'These strings have to be beautiful here.' And Billy was a great interpreter of Barton Lee."

TO REALLY GET A TASTE OF THE PRESENCE NANCY Sinatra had in '60s popular culture, take a look at her Movin' With Nancy NBC TV special, broadcast in December 1967, available on DVD today, and absolutely worth your time. Directed by Jack Haley Jr, it was shot outdoors rather than on a stage, features the Ratpack – Sinatra *père*, Dean Martin and Sammy Davis Jr – still in their prime, a cameo appearance by her brother Frank Jr, and a highly memorable film of Some Velvet Morning with Nancy and Lee, horses, and visual imagery midway between Mad Max and Barbarella.

"I went to Jack and I said, I need you to produce a TV special for me, like you did for the movies," says Sinatra. "I want it on film. And I wanted moving around. That's where 'Moving With Nancy' came from. And Jack's imagination took it from there. I miss him so much."

Yet another one of its cultural milestones: the conclusion of the What'd I Say duet features Nancy delivering a small, affectionate kiss to Sammy Davis Jr's cheek – the first interracial kiss broadcast on American television. "Yeah, I guess it was the kiss heard around the world or something," she recalls now. "Ridiculous."

That same year she would also sing the theme song of the latest James Bond movie, You Only Live Twice. It was one of the best films in the long-lasting series, and Sinatra's song – recorded at Cine-Tele Sound in London's Bayswater – remains a lush highlight of the Bond Theme canon, although it's claimed that Bond producer Cubby Broccoli wanted Nancy's dad and Bond music maestro John Barry favoured Aretha Franklin.

"It was way out of my range," concedes Sinatra, winningly. "I tried my best. I was scared to death." Aware of the intimidation factor of the London Philharmonic, Barry offered to record Sinatra and the orchestra separately, and then piece the parts together – no everyday occurence back then. Even so, Lee Hazlewood had the track re-recorded in Los Angeles with the Wrecking Crew before issuing it as a single in the US.

It was a year of steps outside Sinatra's comfort zone. Earlier, in February, she had flown to Vietnam to entertain the US troops.

"Lee was a hawk originally, and we used to argue about it," she recalls, "but my heart was with the troops, right or wrong. Didn't really matter to me. What mattered to me was the loneliness of that whole thing for those people. I still get teary about it. I just wanted to do something – you know, do anything."

Eventually she and a group of six others – including Verve Records band the Gordian Knot – set out, visiting more remote outposts than those frequented by Bob Hope *et al*.

"We actually went into foxholes, and the look on the guys' faces… I mean, it just made the whole trip worthwhile. Just shaking hands or a quick hug. And we'd bail out of there in a hurry and go to the next spot. We'd see explosions not too far off. And it was *insanity* is what it was. We shouldn't have done that, but we did."

Back in the USA – and all around the world, for that matter – times were changing, and the one-time coolness of go-go boots and miniskirts seemed to fade away into a montage of Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In party gags and third-rate secret agent movies. Sinatra's hits were drying up.

"My music died at that point," she states, matter-of-factly. "There was no market for what I did, for what I do. I was history. I don't say that sadly, because, I mean, the beat goes on, you know?"

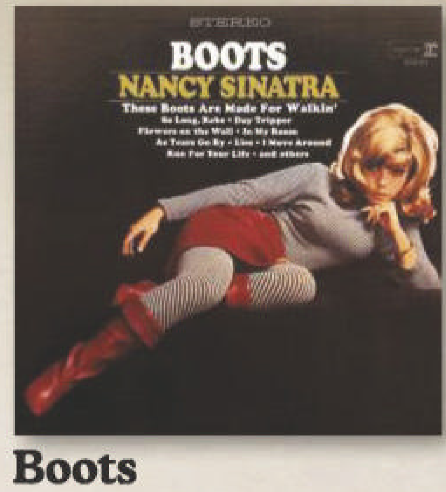
And on it went. Lee Hazlewood unexpectedly departed for Sweden in 1970, and opted to stay there for close to a decade. The partnership with Sinatra wasn't exactly over – there would be two more Nancy & Lee albums, which would eventually surface to little commercial response – but for all intents, it appeared to be a done deal.

"He just left after a few albums and a lot of success," she says today. And there had been no spat between them, either, she adds. "Nothing. We actually toured, did some shows. I still can't put my finger on it. I just don't understand what happened. Except that he gave some lame excuse decades later saying he was worried his son was going to be drafted, which is total bullshit. You know? I mean, he just spouted that out of nowhere."

And if he hadn't left? "If he hadn't disappeared from my life, we probably would have had a contentious working relationship," she says. "We didn't have much of a personal one."

Sweet Sole Music

Four cool-school pop stompers from Nancy (and Lee), surveyed by **Danny Eccleston**.



Boots

(Reprise, 1966)

Quirky arrangements, *crême-de-*LA musicianship plus Sinatra's savvy, unsweetened vocals equal pop gold. As Tears Go By as a bossa nova? Day Tripper as a parpy brass fest? Somehow, they work. Plus, of course, These Boots Are Made For Walkin'. You know it's going to be great from the rubbery descending bass line, and it doesn't disappoint.

STEREO
NANCY & LEE

Nancy & Lee

(Reprise, 1968)

The deep, stoned strangeness of Some Velvet Morning sustained at album length, with added Beatrice & Benedick bantz. You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin' could not be more louche (or slower), although one doubts the likely efficacy of Lee's pick-up line in Sand: "Young woman, share your fire with me…" Sonny & Cher for hipsters.

Nancy

(Reprise, 1969)

After *Boots*, Sinatra was tempted down genre *cul de sacs*: the self-explanatory *Country, My Way*; the cocktail jazz *meh* of *Sugar*. *Nancy* restored her rock'n'roll heart, with a smouldering Light My Fire (*après* Feliciano), and own-brand sophisto-country-rock on Delaney Bramlett's God Knows I Love You. Yet the world had turned away.

nancy & lee
again

Nancy & Lee Again

(RCA, 1972)

Underrated reunion, originally marketed as *Did You Ever?*, and not a big seller, even in the US. Arkansas Coal is classic high-camp Hazlewood Americana. In Big Red Balloon, Lee plans to escape his 40-year marriage in said inflatable, Nancy is unimpressed. A third, 2004's *Nancy & Lee 3*, preceded Lee's death by three years, and is of largely sentimental value.

One life for yourself: (clockwise from top left) Sinatra discusses the You Only Live Twice theme with composer John Barry, London, May 1967; Nancy ruffles the plumage; in the studio with Hazlewood and the Wrecking Crew; visiting US troops in Vietnam, late '60s.

> “I don’t understand why Lee left. He gave some lame excuse that he was worried his son was going to be drafted.”
>
> **Nancy Sinatra**

SINATRA WOULD MOVE TO RCA Records in the early ’70s, record an interesting country collaboration with Mel Tillis in 1981 that reunited her with Billy Strange and Jimmy Bowen, but otherwise largely withdrew from the business to help raise her two daughters, AJ and Amanda, whose father Hugh Lambert died in 1985.

If that was a sacrifice of sorts on Sinatra’s part, her children have set about repaying the debt, spearheading the upcoming anthology and her *Nancy Sinatra* collaborations album of 2004, with guests U2, Morrissey, Thurston Moore, Jarvis Cocker and Jon Spencer among others.

“It’s funny, isn’t it?” says Sinatra. “AJ is the one who put that project together. And she talked to those performers and reeled them in, and they agreed to do songs with me on that. It was my first album that actually used my name as its title. I had never done an album called ‘Nancy Sinatra’ before.”

Given that DNA, it’s perhaps unsurprising that there’s some care taken over Taking Care of Business. For instance, a big chunk of Sinatra’s catalogue now comes via an entity called Boots Enterprises, Inc. “It’s not a label,” she says. “It’s just a company that filters stuff through to me. It’s a *corporation*. Owning your own masters. That’s key. Absolutely.”

It is advice she now offers to all artists.

“That was my dad’s influence,” she explains. “He struggled when he had his deal with Capitol, and he did not own his own masters. And that’s why he started Reprise – because he believed that artists should own their own recordings. Ultimately they *can’t*, initially, because the label has to make back the expenses, but maybe seven years down the road, the masters should revert to the artist. It’s good advice. To all young performers out there – put it in your contract that the masters revert to you after a certain period of time.”

Smart move, but not her smartest. “The smartest thing I did was to step away from show business and be with my kids,” she says. “That’s not what you wanted to hear, huh? But they’ve heard me complain over the years about how I want my legacy to be more than just about Boots, you know? And so they did something about it.

“And the brilliant thing for me, the blessing, is that there’s going to be a book, and the comic book, and calendar, and there’s like a celebration… It’s like fireworks, one thing after another – *pow, pow, pow* – and it’s like: *Wow, they really did it*.” Ⓜ

Photo by Ron Joy ©Boots Enterprises, Inc., Getty, Ed Thrasher/MPTV

Aussie "sci-fi dork" with microtonal guitar and "dumb-arse concepts" forms polymorphous freak-rock collective, pens recipe for obscurity. Yet fuelled by fan obsession, mad productivity and mindblowing live sets KING GIZZARD & THE LIZARD WIZARD are on the up and up, and up. "We wanted to sound like a record collection," they tell STEVIE CHICK.

Photography by **JAMIE WDZIEKONSKI**

EARLY ONE EVENING IN 2010, THE NASCENT KING GIZZARD & The Lizard Wizard to took the stage at The Cornish Arms, a pub on Melbourne's Sydney Road, before a roomful of punters eating dinner. This loose conglomeration of musicians moonlighting from other, more serious bands were led by singer/guitarist Stu Mackenzie, who'd conceived the group as "a dumb Grateful Dead, with songs so simple you could learn them on-stage". Musical freedom was their mission, though Mackenzie concedes this often meant "six guitarists playing at once, three of whom were extraordinarily out of tune. We could clear rooms within 60 seconds.

"Because everyone was usually drunk or loose or whatever," he adds, "this era is a blur." But everyone remembers The Cornish Arms. "We played this horrendous Theremin-led jam, and Stu snapped all but one of his strings halfway through, but kept playing anyway," says gregarious drummer Michael 'Cavs' Cavanagh. "It was awful. At the end, this bloke pushed his plate aside, walked over and said, dead serious, 'Guys, that was the worst thing I've ever seen. You will never, *ever* play stadiums.'"

WHILE THIS STINGING REBUKE STILL HOLDS TRUE – KING GIZZARD & The Lizard Wizard have yet to grace a stadium stage – the septet have since become a global cult phenomenon. Over a dizzying 17 albums in a decade, they've spanned garage-psych Nuggetry, jazz-fusion odysseys and thrash-metal concept albums, while Mackenzie's fantasy-themed lyrics – spinning yarns of Tolkien-esque monstrosities, apocalyptic visions and a "confused cyborg" named Han-Tyumi – piece together a twisted, interlocking mythos ➢

"We're a big family" King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard, Melbourne, October 2020 (clockwise from top left) Stu Mackenzie, Joey Walker, Cook Craig, Lucas Skinner, Ambrose Kenny-Smith, Michael Cavanagh.

To nonagon infinity and beyond: (left) Mackenzie on-stage at the Scala, London, 2015; (right) with former drummer Eric Moore in New York, April 29, 2019; (insets) KGLW albums.

"THEY CALLED ME 'PSYCHEDELIC', SO WE MADE A SPAGHETTI WESTERN ALBUM, TO PROVE THAT WE COULD BE ANYTHING," Stu Mackenzie

⋖ dubbed the "Gizzverse" by a dedicated following. "I don't think I'm any more creative than the average person," says Mackenzie, in the Melbourne house he shares with his wife and cats. "I don't think I have an absurd amount of ideas – I just follow through with most of them." Proving the point are latest album *KG*, and a sequel to follow in 2021. Further exploring the middle-eastern psychedelia of 2017's *Flying Microtonal Banana*, these new LPs find King Gizzard's playful invention still thriving under Covid's heavy manners. But Mackenzie misses the camaraderie of the pre-lockdown days. "The social aspect has always been very important to me," he says.

Two serendipitous events drew a 16-year-old Mackenzie down this current fantastical path. First was making friends with "the arty, muso kids at school in Geelong who didn't like footie so much", leading him to badger his dad for a guitar. Next, a serious Aussie Rules football injury. "I tore my anterior cruciate ligament, and my knee was basically jelly," he winces. "I spent eight weeks in traction, just learning guitar. I became obsessed with it."

On recovery, Mackenzie ditched sport to play music with guitarist Cook Craig, bassist Lucas Skinner and harmonica-playing pro-skateboarder Ambrose Kenny-Smith, future Gizzards all. They later moved to Melbourne to study, where Mackenzie befriended drummers Cavs and Eric Moore, and Joey Walker, a guitarist with a lucrative sideline as an electronica DJ/producer, TrumpDisco. "We all lived in two shared houses across the road from each other," Mackenzie says. "I remember a lot of late nights, a lot of live music, and not much else."

With a fluid line-up that often swamped stages, the band's early public outings were "absolute chaos", according to Skinner. Within a year, however, they gathered unlikely momentum, and the membership solidified into what Mackenzie calls "the seven who never left". "We were all playing in so many other bands," says Cavanagh. "But Gizzard were the only one people turned out to see."

A couple of self-released EPs and 2012 debut album *12 Bar Bruise* followed, released on their own label, Flightless. But when local media championed their garage-y take on psychedelia, a fear of pigeonholing provoked the first in a chain of creative *volte-faces*. For second album *Eyes Like The Sky*, Ambrose's father, British-born actor/muso Broderick Smith, narrated a dark wild west fantasy over a Morricone-esque soundtrack. "It was my 'stick it to the man' moment, or maybe just an act of self-determination," grins Mackenzie. "They called me 'psychedelic', so we made a spaghetti western album, to prove that, actually, we could be anything we wanted."

IT'S MAY 2014, AND IF KING GIZZARD & THE LIZARD Wizard aren't playing their weekly 3am residency at Brooklyn bar Baby's All Right or jamming at the ski lodge they've rented on Hunter Mountain in upstate New York, they're at the Daptone House Of Soul, a legendary all-analogue studio in Bushwick. Halfway round the world, nearly completely unknown, a new era for the band is sketchily underway.

Back in Melbourne, Mackenzie had been living off "the dole, instant noodles and free beer at gigs", essentially homeless, crashing on mates' couches with only a guitar to his name and nothing to plug it into. However, the growing buzz surrounding the effervescent psych-rock of third album *Float Along – Fill Your Lungs* inspired Mackenzie to take a high-risk leap into the unknown: the band's first tour of America. "We played to no one, we lost heaps of money," laughs Mackenzie. "But gradually, at every show, we could see there were slightly more people. And really, the whole thing was just about being seven Australian idiot kids who didn't know what they were doing but had somehow made it to New York."

Yet it was in the States that King Gizzard's identity clarified, and Mackenzie's status attained something guru-like.

"Stu is like the embodiment of an ego-less person," says Joey Walker. "He gave me faith in my songwriting. I'd never met someone with that ability to just *let go*. We'd struggled to define what Gizzard actually was. We'd genre-hopped a lot, and that caused a lot of confusion. But New York was this great moment where we realised, 'Oh, this is what we do – we just do heaps of different crap!'"

Newly enlightened, the group returned to Daptone in 2015 for an ambitious eighth album, *Nonagon Infinity*, conceived as a never-

Getty (2), Jamie Wdziekoński, Jason Galea (2), John Stewart

"This is what we do": King Gizzard, not flagging in the USA, 2014.

Shooting the video for *Nonagon Infinity*'s People-Vultures, Victoria, Australia, 2019.

Mackenzie and a raft of ideas from *Fishing For Fishies* video, Brunswick East, Melbourne, 2019.

Interconnected worlds: Wizards cast their spell at Alexandra Palace, London, 2019.

CRAZY NAME, CRAZY ALBUMS

Four corners of the Gizzverse, mapped by **STEVIE CHICK**.

NONAGON INFINITY

(Heavenly, 2016)

Though its infinite "sonic Möbius strip" format suggested gimmickry over substance, the modular, interlocking structure of *Nonagon Infinity* sharpens its prog-metallic math-rock attack. The complex production – which Stu Mackenzie navigated via piles of hand-scrawled diagrammatic maps – almost drove the Gizzard King insane; the motorik gallop of Evil Death Roll proves it was worth it.

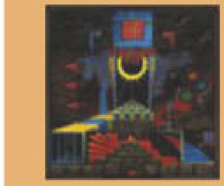
FLYING MICROTONAL BANANA

(Heavenly, 2017)

Under the spell of Selda Bağcan and Erkin Koray, Mackenzie's search for "the notes between the notes" saw him strap on an electric guitar modified to replicate the microtonal sounds achievable on a traditional Turkish bağlama (the titular Flying Microtonal Banana). The resulting set of middle-eastern psychedelia remains Mackenzie's favourite Gizzard release.

POLYGONDWANALAND

(self-released, 2017)



Gizzard's twelfth consolidated *Nonagon*'s shifting time signatures and *FMB*'s arcane melodic palette into their most satisfying full-length yet. Released as free open-source sound files, fans have since bootlegged the album – with Gizzard's blessing – in a plethora of gonzo formats, including nonagon-shaped vinyl, 8-tracks, reel-to-reels and 3.5-inch floppy disks.

INFEST THE RATS' NEST

(Flightless, 2019)

Finger-tapping into his youthful adoration of thrash, hardcore thrash, Mackenzie's scarifying metal-opera, set in a dystopian near-future where the rich have abandoned an Earth rendered uninhabitable by mankind's selfishness, relocating to the unsullied Mars. Savage, satirical and blackly hilarious, especially on Self-Immolate ("I have gone insane-o/I lust for volcano").

ending "sonic Möbius strip" – a multi-dimensional jigsaw of interlinking riffs and repeating motifs that drove Mackenzie to distraction but won the group Best Hard Rock/Heavy Metal Album at 2016's ARIA Awards (the Australian version of the Grammys). "Doing things the hard way takes you to places you'd never reach otherwise," he reasons. "It's always worth it."

Returning to Melbourne with international plaudits ringing in their ears, the band set up a new Flightless/Gizzard HQ in a warehouse-cum-studio-space at 253 Lygon Street. Five further Gizzard full-lengths followed in 2017 alone, their range epitomised by *Sketches Of Brunswick East*'s jazz-rock excursions and *Flying Microtonal Banana* – on which Mackenzie played a specially-made hybrid of electric six-string and traditional bağlama so he could play "the notes between the notes". "I never wanted us to sound like one band or genre," remembers Mackenzie. "I wanted us to sound like a record collection."

Another 2017 release, *Murder Of The Universe* – which told of Han-Tyumi engulfing the galaxy in android vomit – saw Mackenzie's love of sci-fi take centre-stage, kicking fan immersion in the "Gizzverse" to another level. "I'm a sci-fi dork at heart," he admits. "Nowadays, I can sit through a movie about relationships or whatever, but years ago I connected better to fantasy. I find sci-fi a useful writing tool – it's fun to world-build. Like, I can't write another love song – they've all been written. But creating my own interconnected world… That's just so much fun."

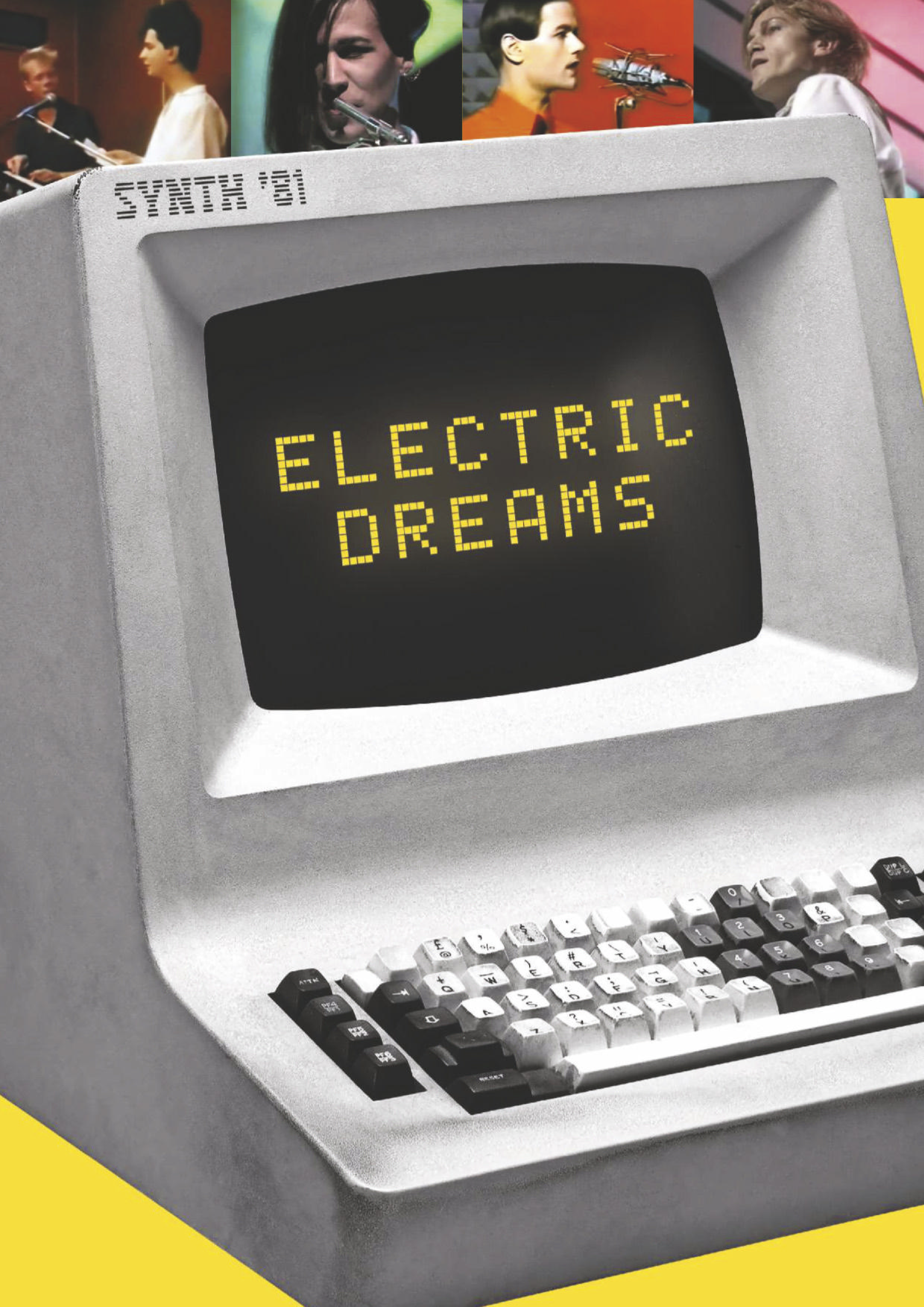
Like the best sci-fi, Mackenzie's is not pure escapism. Witness the prescient virus-themed Superbug from 2019's thrash-metal dystopia *Infest The Rats' Nest*. "It's about fear," he says, his laidback demeanour darkening. "Not fear of the bogeyman, but existential, human-extinction fear. It's the scariest thing, to me."

KING GIZZARD APPROACH 2021 looking forwards and backwards. With *KG* and its sister album finished, they've built a new HQ to replace the recently vacated 253 Lygon Street. Mackenzie admits mixed feelings over leaving their old "clubhouse": "A lot of our records were made there, heaps of parties, hanging out every day with my best mates, making music… It's really been great. But here's to the next five years, I suppose."

Change is in the air. Earlier in the year, drummer Eric Moore announced his amicable exit, to focus his energies on Flightless. "It's weird, to think that next time we go on tour he won't be there," says Mackenzie. "We're not actively looking for another drummer. It would be like adding another family member. At this stage we soldier on as a six-piece."

Yet the ranks of their adherents continue to swell. "To the die-hard fans on our Reddit page, we're like a boy-band," grins Joey Walker. "They all have their favourite members." As for the future, Ambrose Kenny-Smith says the group are "just excited to get around each other and jam again", while Walker predicts "more of the same shit, subverting the norm as we usually do, and coming up with more dumb-arse concepts."

And Mackenzie? "Everyone else has their own side-projects, but King Gizzard is the only thing I do, and I'm happy with that. Though I'm about to become a dad for the first time, so maybe things *will* be different. I got into this for the music, to travel the world, to live this lucid life – but mostly for the friendship. We're a big family, and I don't see that ever changing." Ⓜ


SYNTH '81
ELECTRIC DREAMS

Push the button: the future pilots of 1981 (above, from left) Depeche Mode's Vince Clarke (left) and Dave Gahan; Human League's Phil Oakey; Kraftwerk's Ralf Hütter; John Foxx; Prince; New Order's Bernard Sumner; Pete Shelley; Soft Cell's Marc Almond.

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EINS, ZWEI, DREI, FEAR, FUNK, SEX!

LED BY KRAFTWERK'S EXAMPLE, SYNTH MUSIC WAS THE COMING GENRE AS THE '70S CLOSED, BUT IT WAS IN 1981 THAT IT ACHIEVED CRITICAL MASS. JON SAVAGE FIRES UP THE MOOG PRODIGY AND REWINDS 40 YEARS, TO WHEN THE HUMAN LEAGUE AND SOFT CELL RACED NEW ORDER AND CABARET VOLTAIRE TO THE EDGIEST SOUNDS, AND RADIOS IN BRITAIN AND BEYOND RANG TO REVOLUTIONARY FUTUREPOP, BUILT ON TRANSISTORS AND TRANSGRESSION.

IT'S LATE 1976, AND THE CLASH ARE BEING interviewed by Janet Street-Porter for London Weekend Television. They are not helping: short answers followed by stony silences and pseudo psycho stares. "I think that's where the complexities came in you know," Joe Strummer spits in an answer to a question about hippies; "and people thought, We'd better buy a Moog synth-e-si-zer." Although Strummer's desire to conceal his hippy roots was understandable – this was Year Zero, after all – his statement had a limited shelf life.

Punk was new then, but it wasn't new for long. In 1976 and early 1977 London punk was the future, but after the furore over the Sex Pistols' God Save The Queen in June '77 it already seemed spent. In the summer of that year, there were two huge hits that ➢

Getty

⋖ changed pop. Donna Summer's I Feel Love (Number 1 UK in early August) and Magic Fly by Space (Number 2 in early September) made it clear: the Moog synthesizer was the future. Jane Suck and I picked up on this for the New Musick issue of Sounds magazine in November, where we mentioned the phrase "post-punk".

It didn't matter whether it was the despised disco in all its forms or the weird electronic fringe. Together with Bowie's *Low* and Kraftwerk's *Trans-Europe Express*, released in January and March 1977, the move towards electronica seemed inevitable and was confirmed by the second side of Bowie's *"Heroes"* (released November), the first albums by Suicide and Pere Ubu (released late 1977 and early 1978 respectively), and the strange dark synth sound of early 1978 singles by Throbbing Gristle (United) and The Normal (T.V.O.D.).

Punk complained about alienation but nothing was more robotic and remote than disco during that period. In 1978 and 1979, disco was full of strange electronic sounds, whether in hits like Sylvester's groundbreaking You Make Me Feel (Mighty Real), dancefloor favourites like Slick's Space Bass, electronic suites like side four of Donna Summer's *Bad Girls* double, or Eurodisco *passim*. When the style exhausted itself later that year, it was the UK avant-garde that temporarily took up the standard.

Having developed in near isolation since 1977, first wave electro was ready to make its move. Synthesizers were upfront in later 1978 records by Cabaret Voltaire, Ultravox! and Human League, while The Normal's Daniel Miller and Robert Rental teamed up for a series of storming live synth experiments in early 1979. Joy Division augmented their guitar/bass/drums format with Syndrums and a home-made synthesizer during later 1979 – a shift that found its apogee on their second album, *Closer*.

The biggest new British star of 1979 was Gary Numan, who defined synth pop with two enormous hits, Are "Friends" Electric? and Cars – both of which went to Number 1 and crossed the Atlantic. Cars reached Number 9 on the US chart, and was a staple of black-orientated, underground radio shows in Chicago and Detroit. At the same time, Devo were experimenting with electronic textures, most notably on their biggest US hit, Whip It, which breached the US Top 20 in late 1980.

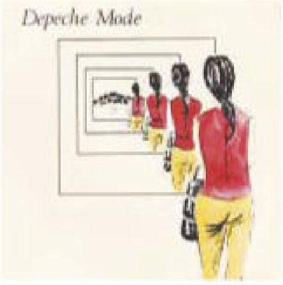
By the start of 1981, the stage was set for UK synth pop to find its time. It didn't dominate the UK charts, of course, which were full of hits by Adam Ant and Shakin' Stevens, but two synth tunes were among the Top 10 best-selling singles of the year: Vienna by Ultravox was at Number 5, while Soft Cell's Tainted Love was the biggest single of the whole year. So here are 12 key recordings from 1981, now 40 years ago, when synth pop was still new and crossing the Atlantic to become electro – which is another story.

New life: (clockwise from above) Throbbing Gristle, London YMCA, 1979; Gary Numan; the '81-vintage Human League; Dave Gahan *à la* Mode, Blackwing Studios, June 17, 1981.

DEPECHE MODE

DREAMING OF ME

(Mute single, February)



During 1979, Daniel Miller had the idea of a fictitious synth pop group called the Silicon Teens: two fun singles – Memphis Tennessee and Judy In Disguise – were followed by an album in 1980. Shortly afterwards, he found the real version: a teenage group from Basildon who played only electronic equipment and, in the person of Vince Clarke, had a talented writer of snappy pop tunes. Taking their name from a French fashion magazine, Depeche Mode slipstreamed into the New Romantic movement, then reaching its commercial height with singles by Spandau Ballet and Visage. They released three singles in 1981, of which this was the first. Reaching Number 57, Dreaming Of Me sets out their stall: no 'real' instruments, plentiful pop hooks, youthful innocence, teen appeal, dressing up, and *Zeitgeist*-catching lyrics that mixed narcissism with alienation, and a general sense of oncoming dread.

HUMAN LEAGUE

THE SOUND OF THE CROWD

(Virgin single, April)

HUMAN
LEAGUE
RED
THE SOUND OF THE CROWD

The year's first 24-carat pop classic, a remarkable turnaround for a group which had had its thunder stolen by Gary Numan and had split, somewhat acrimoniously, the previous year after two years without a hit. Having lost key members Martyn Ware and Ian Craig Marsh, League singer Phil Oakey went looking for inspiration and found it in the local disco: adding new singers Joanne Catherall and Susanne Sulley, as well as pop-savant ex-Rezillo Jo Callis, Human League went looking for action. The Sound Of The Crowd brought the disco into the studio, and topped it off with an irresistible synth riff and an impenetrably surreal lyric: "stroke a pocket with a print of a laughing sound". It reached Number 12 in the UK charts, occasioning a brace of Top Of The Pops performances remarkable for Oakey's half-and-half haircut and the sight of synth player Ian Burden *dancing* as he jabbed the keys. It was the start of a rapid imperial phase that saw Don't You Want Me rise to Number 1 in both the US and the UK late in the year.

PATRICK COWLEY

MEGATRON MAN

(Metronome single, April)

Megatron Man
Patrick Cowley

Cowley first came to prominence with the worldwide success of Sylvester's You Make Me Feel (Mighty Real) in late 1978, on which he played the synthesizer that dominated the record's sound. He later wrote half of Sylvester's 1979 album *Stars*, and the connection continued when, after Sylvester was dropped by Fantasy Records, he signed to Cowley's Megatone Records, which specifically catered to the gay club scene in San Francisco. A completely synthesized epic, Megatron Man celebrates the coming of the new man through a heavily treated voice and rippling electronic rhythms and countermelodies. It's now possible to hear it, along with contemporary productions by Bobby 'O', as the origin of hi-NRG but that's to ignore the complexity of the sound picture: the original is often the best. Released all over Europe, it was a massive club hit, while also reaching Number 2 on the Billboard Hot Dance Music/Club Play chart.

Virginia Turbett/Getty, Getty (4), Camera Press

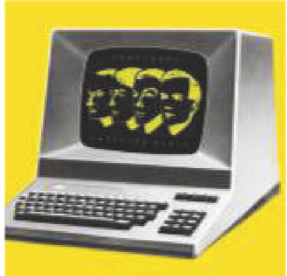
Time forward: Kraftwerk, Keio Plaza Hotel, Tokyo, 1981 (from left) Wolfgang Flür, Florian Schneider, Ralf Hütter, Karl Bartos.

> “ELECTRONIC MUSIC IS A KIND OF WORLD MUSIC. I THINK THAT THE GLOBAL VILLAGE IS COMING.”
> RALF HÜTTER

KRAFTWERK

NUMBERS

(from Computer World album, EMI, May)



By 1981, Kraftwerk were well into their cycle of concept albums, and *Computer World* – their first since 1978’s *The Man-Machine* – was the starkest yet. Numbers is pure, sensuous minimalism, with heavily treated, disembodied voices reading out numbers in several languages, the nearest that the group had come yet to its global ideal: as Ralf Hütter told me in 1991, “Electronic music is a kind of world music. I think that the Global Village is coming.” Shortly afterwards, Afrika Bambaataa And The Soulsonic Force released Planet Rock, a mixture of Bronx street rap and cool, electronic beats taken from Numbers, with the overlaid melody of Trans-Europe Express, in doing so creating one of the founding documents of hip-hop. At last, the world was catching up with Kraftwerk: early in 1982, they’d score a UK Number 1 with a 7-inch of *The Man-Machine*’s The Model after its re-emergence on the flip of *Computer World*’s Computer Love single.

JOHN FOXX

EUROPE AFTER THE RAIN

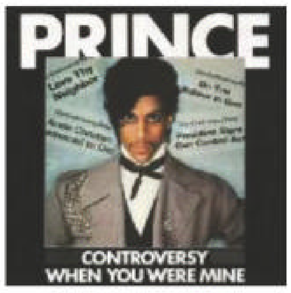
(Metal Beat/Virgin single, August)

A pioneer of UK electronica with Ultravox songs like Quiet Men and Hiroshima Mon Amour, Foxx released a series of austere and pioneering 45s in 1980: Underpass, No-One Driving, Burning Car. Released as a taster from his second solo LP, *The Garden*, Europe After The Rain marked a change in course: lusher, with choral elements, acoustic guitars, and lyrics that reignited the Continental romance of “the fountain squares and colonnades”. Europe After The Rain went to Number 40, with a Top Of The Pops appearance, but as Foxx notes on his Metamatic website, “the underground sprung a leak when every man and his dog began making electronic music.” A relationship with an ideal of Europe – be it Berlin Bowie, or names like Spandau Ballet and Depeche Mode – was a mark of ’80s UK electronica: even more poignant when viewed from Brexit Britain.

PRINCE

WHEN YOU WERE MINE

(Warner Bros B-side, September)



Already a year old when released as the flip of the Controversy single, When You Were Mine showed Prince’s preternatural ability to include different musical forms within simple structures. A straightforward song of loss with basic funk/new wave instrumentation, When You Were Mine is transformed by the lead synthesizer melody – played by Prince himself – which pulls the ➢

“WE WEREN’T VERY INTERESTED IN POP”

CABARET VOLTAIRE’S RICHARD H KIRK ON THE ROAD TO 1981’S *RED MECCA*, AND BEYOND.

“I SUPPOSE I came to German electronic music through Roxy Music – Eno saying anyone could be a musician was a big influence. Me and Stephen [Mallinder] and Chris [Watson] started making recordings in Chris’s loft, where he had a 4-track open-reel tape machine, a small mixer – very minimal equipment. I’d read a fair bit of William Burroughs and knew about Burroughs’ and Brion Gysin’s cut-up tape experiments. It felt like the natural thing to do.

Feeding into *Red Mecca*, there were some important factors. In 1979, you had the Islamic revolution in Iran, and the invasion of Afghanistan by the Russians. We started to look East and take on board Middle Eastern flavours – our crude version of world music. Then there was the civil unrest in Britain: the [1980-81] riots in Bristol, Brixton, Handsworth, Toxteth. I remember Jon Savage visited us at Western Works studio with a VHS copy of the Orson Welles movie, A Touch Of Evil – such a brilliant film. The intrigue and tension of it, and Henry Mancini’s soundtrack with all the brass – we did a version of that, but with a £150 Roland synthesizer with a whole load of echo.

We weren’t very interested in pop. We liked Phil Spector, and Bowie, and Roxy Music. And we liked garage punk. Earlier, we’d covered No Escape by The Seeds [on debut album, *Mix-Up*] and [1979 single] Nag Nag Nag is a bit like The Seeds or Count Five. But we didn’t want to go any further down that path. I had a lot of time for the Human League. I think they always made it clear that they wanted to do pop music with electronic instruments. Our mission was different. I like to think we held a mirror to the world and refracted it back through a kind of LSD filter, or a malfunctioning TV. What goes in one end doesn’t look quite the same when it comes out the other.

***Red Mecca* was pretty much the last record with Chris. Then *The Crackdown* came out and that freaked a few people out. But it was kind of meant to. It was on a major label and the production quality – because it was done at Trident studios on 24-track – wasn’t so DIY. People moaned about it – it was like when Eno left Roxy Music! But you know, there’s no point trying to please people.**

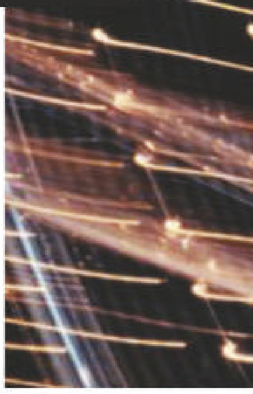
I kind of operate under the same principles today – although I do admit, I’ve been quite pleased with the reception to the new album [*Shadow Of Fear*] thus far. I think I’ve achieved what Cabaret Voltaire always did, which is something that sounds like nothing else.”

As told to Danny Eccleston

> “WE REFRACTED THE WORLD THROUGH A KIND OF LSD FILTER, OR A MALFUNCTIONING TV.”

Cabaret Voltaire’s album Shadow Of Fear is out now on Mute.

Behind the mask: Cabaret Voltaire’s Stephen Mallinder (left) and Richard H Kirk.



Feeling every beat: (clockwise from far left) Bernard Sumner, on-stage with New Order, North London Polytechnic, January 23, 1981; Prince; John Foxx; Donna Summer in *Bad Girls* mode, 1979; Pete Shelley makes way for the homo superior, 1981.

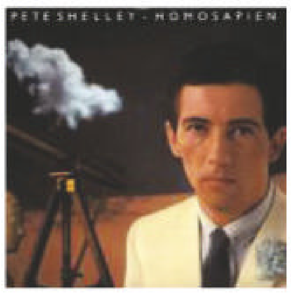
> "THIS NEW KIND OF MUSIC HAD A WONDERFUL EFFECT ON ME. I LOVED THE PRECISION OF IT." BERNARD SUMNER

song along and enacts the lyric's dilemma. From an LP – *Dirty Mind* – that revelled in poly-sexuality, When You Were Mine fit right into the discussions around gender and sexual preference that were beginning to manifest in UK pop…

PETE SHELLEY

HOMOSAPIEN

(Genetic/Island single, September)



…which were made explicit in this groundbreakingly frank song. Gender-bending in general had been heavily indicated in the New Romantic subculture, which had done so much to promote electronic music, and was hitting the UK charts during 1981. An obvious push was to make the homosexuality that fuelled the impulse explicit, and Shelley broke cover with this, his first solo single: "homo superior, in my interior". A logical continuation of the classic 1977 Buzzcocks single Orgasm Addict, Homosapien launched Shelley as an electronic pop artist, in which mode he continued with *XL1*, his 1983 album that came packaged with a program that created visuals when used on the Sinclair ZX Spectrum – one of the UK's first mainstream home computers.

NEW ORDER

EVERYTHING'S GONE GREEN

(Factory single, September)

The moment New Order broke free of Joy Division's shadow. As Bernard Sumner recalled: "I was really depressed after Ian died, very unhappy. Mark Reeder from Berlin used to send me over electro music: $E=MC^2$ by Giorgio Moroder, Donna Summer albums, early Italian disco records. And I used to go to Spin Inn and get a lot of gay disco records. This new kind of music had a wonderful effect on me. I loved the precision of it, 'cos I'm a real techno-head. I love machinery, I love electronics. I suddenly thought, This is the birth of a new kind of music."

Beginning with the sound of a drum machine and sparking into life with Peter Hook's bass, Everything's Gone Green resolves into a synth pulse that is pure Moroder. The lyrics are still haunted – "It seems like I've been here before" – but the real joy happens just three minutes in, when the group ride the electronic rhythms into the sunset, punctuated by the whoops of their manager Rob Gretton – marvelling at the switch from black and white to colour.

CABARET VOLTAIRE

RED MASK

(from Red Mecca album, Rough Trade, September)

Their third and last album for Rough Trade, *Red Mecca* was a quantum leap. Well known for their harsh, industrial sound collages, Sheffield's electronic pioneers had discovered forward propulsion and melody at the same time as vocalist Stephen 'Mal' Mallinder refined his bark into an obsessive, percussive singing voice. Red Mask is totally great: seven minutes of menacing motorik set to a simple, almost garage synth riff, like The Seeds meet Neu! *Red Mecca* went to Number 1 in the UK Indie chart, and the majors came calling: a deal with Virgin via Some Bizzare followed. In 1983, CV had a Top 40 album with *The Crackdown*, which included the monstrous industrial funk of Just Fascination – produced by disco maven John Luongo, but that's another story.

SOFT CELL

BEDSITTER

(Some Bizzare single, October)

Their follow-up single to the runaway Tainted Love went deeper and weirder, as you might expect from these Northern weirdos steeped in performance art and Northern soul. Constructed on a repetitive Dave Ball synth riff, Bedsitter shows Marc Almond shredding the central myth of

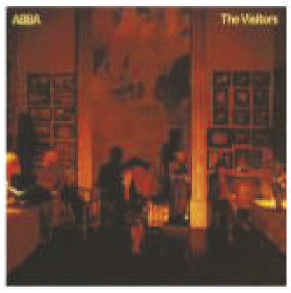
Lynn Goldsmith/Camera Press, Camera Press, Getty (4)

clubland – "Start the nightlife over again/And kid myself I'm having fun" – while acknowledging its compulsive consequences: "Watch the mirror count the lines/The battle scars of all the good times." Propelled by a brilliant kitchen-sink pop video by Tim Pope, the edited single went to Number 4 in the UK charts, the second of five Soft Cell Top 5s in a row. At nearly eight minutes, the 12-inch mix is the version to have, with a great Almond crap rap – "Do you look a mess, do you have a hangover?…" – and its climactic mantra: "I'm waiting for something/I'm only passing time/And I don't care/I don't care…" Defiance in the face of emptiness and loneliness, one of the greatest records of the 1980s.

ABBA

THE VISITORS

(from The Visitors album, Epic, November)



I was never a particular Abba fan – Fernando was a blight on the spring of 1976 – but this brought me up short in late 1981. The Visitors is an epic, psychedelic synth song evoking life in a totalitarian state: "I hear the doorbell ring and suddenly the panic takes me/The sound so ominously tearing through the silence/I cannot move, I'm standing/Numb and frozen." As the voices soar, synths pulse and backwards tapes whizz by in a completely involving and lavish production. As the title track of their eighth and final studio album, which reached UK Number 1 over Christmas that year, The Visitors went into hundreds of thousands of homes in late 1981 and early 1982: a true piece of avant-garde mass art.

A NUMBER OF NAMES

SHAREVARI

(Capriccio single, December)

Capriccio
Records
A NUMBER OF NAMES
SHAREVARI

Beginning in real time with the drum machine warming up, Sharevari is a perfect blend of minimal percussive spookiness, bubbling electronic melodies, teenage backing vox, and an understated, stylised vocal that celebrates the upscale lifestyle that A Number Of Names – Detroit high schoolers Paul Lesley and Stirling Jones – hoped to experience at Detroit nightclubs like Capriccio and Charivari, from which the track takes its name. Mentioning highlife signifiers like L'Uomo Vogue magazine and a Porsche 928, Sharevari became a local classic, being played by Electrifying Mojo on his WGPR show. Its effect can be seen in the wonderful YouTube clip of a full blown dance-off on The Scene, the Detroit dance show that aired on WGPR-TV from 1975 onwards: the predominantly African-American contestants are all dressed smartly, yet triggered by the machine pulse of Sharevari they simulate the stiff repetitive spasms of robots. Techno and electro are just around the corner.

"TRANSGRESSIVE IS AN IMPORTANT WORD"

SOFT CELL'S DAVE BALL: FROM ELECTRO PUNK TO CHART ARISTOCRAT, THANKS TO A KORG SB100 SYNTHE BASS.

"LIKE MOST people of my age, I was blown away by *Autobahn*. I was working in an ice cream van in Blackpool with a guy who had a cassette of it. I was into Northern soul but I'd heard electronic music on TV programmes – the BBC Radiophonic Workshop on Doctor Who – and seen Kraftwerk on Tomorrow's World [in September 1975].

Marc [Almond, Soft Cell singer] and I had gone through punk, but wanted to do something more futuristic. Like Throbbing Gristle and Cabaret Voltaire but a bit more lyrical. We wanted to make catchy but twisted pop songs. But we were just two weird guys from Leeds Poly art school – being in the charts was never the plan. We were electro punks. We never saw ourselves as 'new romantics'. We weren't aspirational like Spandau Ballet or Duran Duran. If we'd done a video on a yacht it'd have sunk. A canoe was more our speed!

> "IF WE'D DONE A VIDEO ON A YACHT IT'D HAVE SUNK. A CANOE WOULD HAVE BEEN MORE OUR SPEED."

Bedsitter was totally autobiographical. Marc and I were both living in a housing association building in a rough part of inner-city Leeds. Marc had the room right next to mine. We'd pass cassettes to each other across the corridor, music and lyrics. He had a job in the bar at Leeds Playhouse in the day and a cloakroom attendant at the Warehouse in the evening. Then we'd go out clubbing at night with our mates and come back to these horrible rooms.

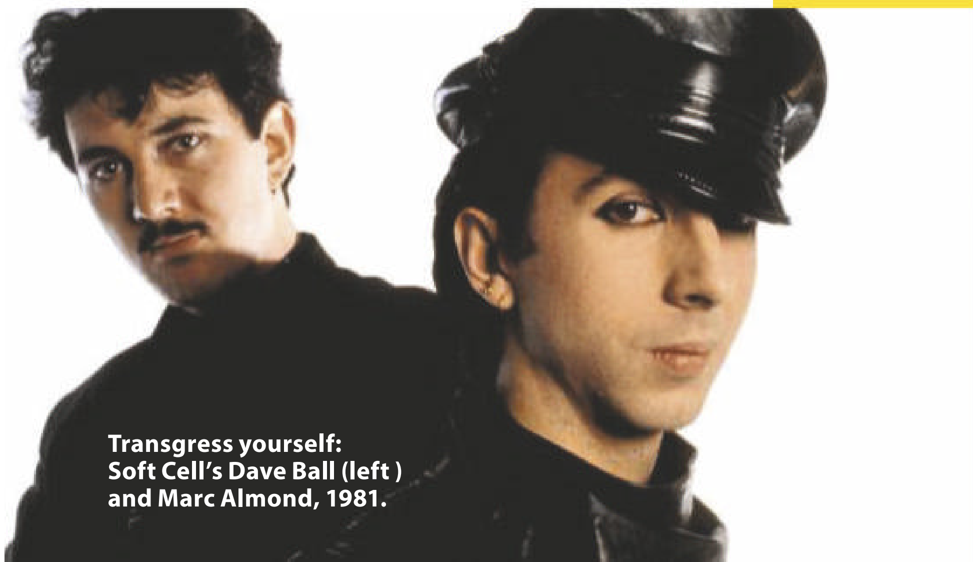
The Duane Eddy twang on Bedsitter is a Korg SB100 Synthe Bass. It had this function – the 'bender' – that altered the pitch and gave you that sound. And the bass sounds had a dirty, moody murkiness I loved. After Tainted Love had been a hit, we recorded the rest of the *Non Stop Erotic Cabaret* album in New York with Mike Thorne, and the Synthe Bass was the only thing I took with me – it looked like a briefcase when you closed it up. By contrast, the kind of *wump, wump* sound was Mike Thorne's Synclavier – £120,000's worth! That was our technological advantage over the other synth bands at the time. In fact, I remember Don Was calling me – desperate to know how we got those sounds. And the drums on Bedsitter were the Roland TR808 – I think we may have been the first to use it on a chart record.

'Transgressive' is an important word I think. It's a word [Throbbing Gristle's] Cosey Fanni Tutti uses, and a word Marc uses. Sex Dwarf was an absolute act of transgression. We had the bloomin' vice squad coming down to confiscate the videos. But the title had come from a News Of The World headline in the first place, then our song became a News Of The World headline, in a newspaper that printed pictures of topless women. It was a bizarre, hypocritical world.

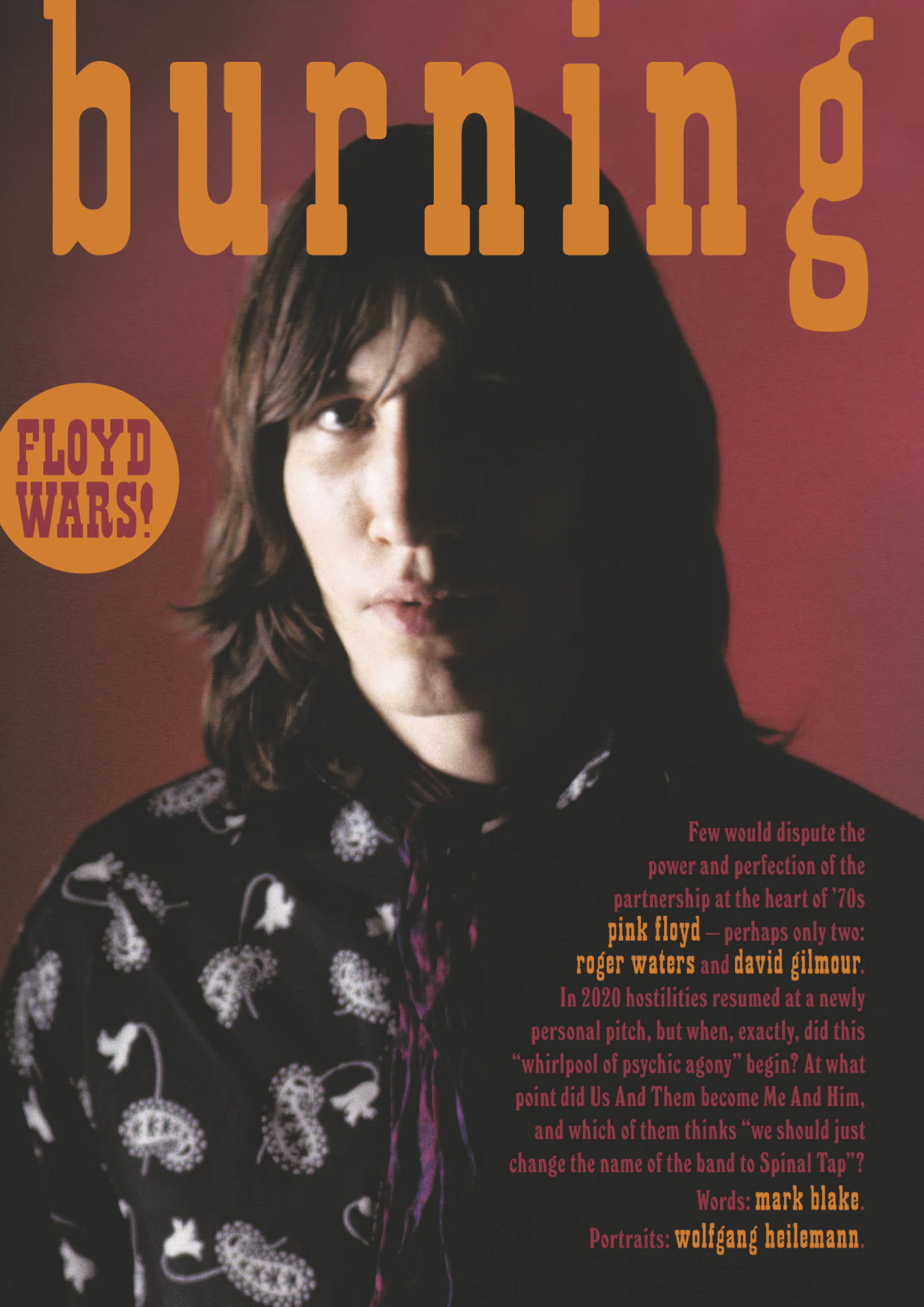
This year, I was doing a live streaming performance with Marc at Dean Street Studios [in London], and he said, 'Did you know 2021 is the 40th anniversary of *Non Stop Erotic Cabaret*? We must do something.' I said, 'Let's get some prosecco and a cake!' But I think he had something more elaborate in mind, so watch this space."

As told to Danny Eccleston

A reissue of Soft Cell's Cruelty Without Beauty LP is out now on Big Frock. Dave Ball's memoir, Electronic Boy, is published by Omnibus.



Transgress yourself: Soft Cell's Dave Ball (left) and Marc Almond, 1981.



burning

FLOYD WARS!

Few would dispute the power and perfection of the partnership at the heart of '70s **pink floyd** – perhaps only two: **roger waters** and **david gilmour**. In 2020 hostilities resumed at a newly personal pitch, but when, exactly, did this "whirlpool of psychic agony" begin? At what point did Us And Them become Me And Him, and which of them thinks "we should just change the name of the band to Spinal Tap"?

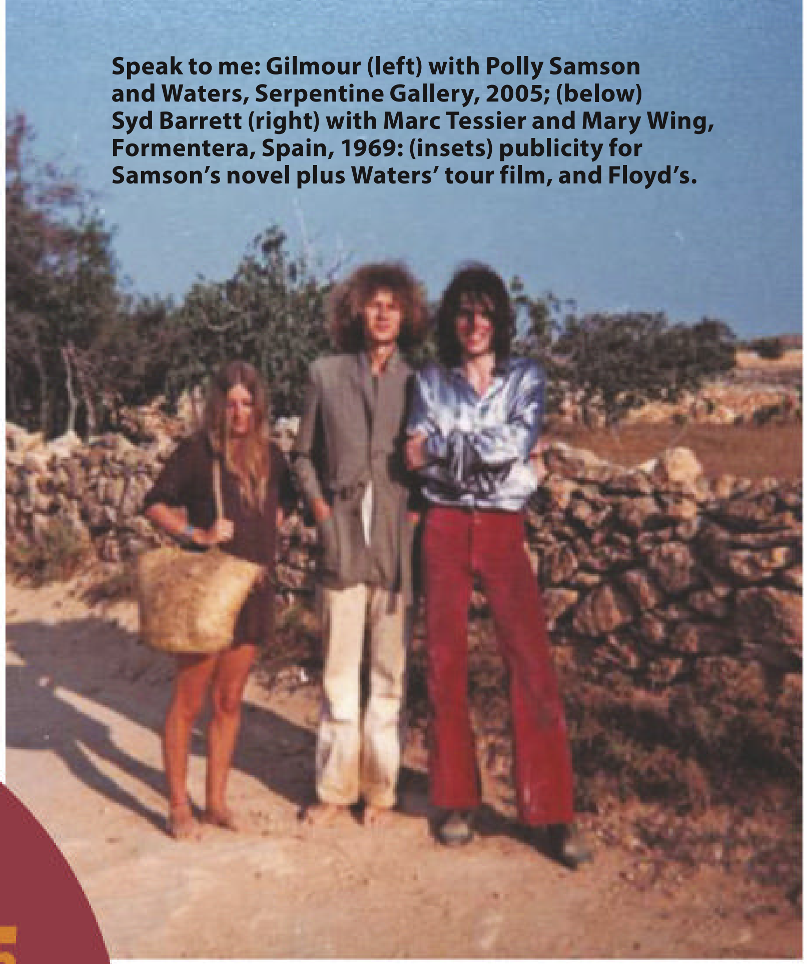
Words: **mark blake**.

Portraits: **wolfgang heilemann**.

bridges

"I'm glad we didn't break up after *The Dark Side Of The Moon*. Going through all that pain we came up with some good work," admitted Roger Waters (left), with David Gilmour in 1968.

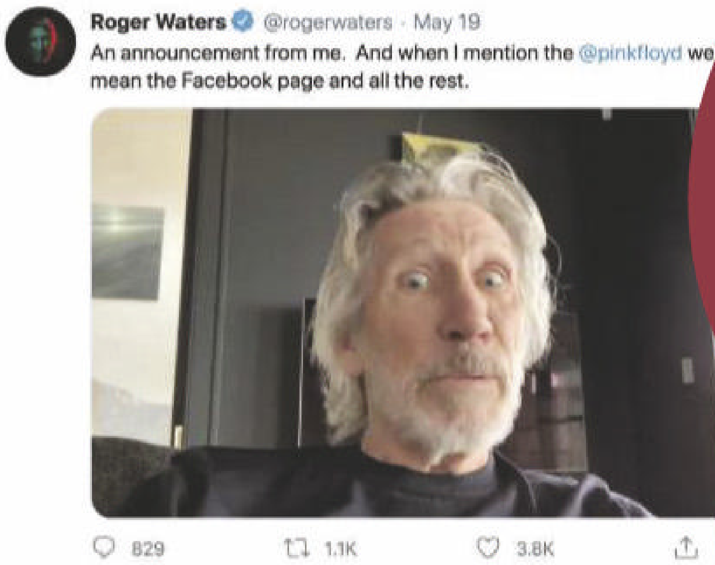
Camera Press/Heilemann



Speak to me: Gilmour (left) with Polly Samson and Waters, Serpentine Gallery, 2005; (below) Syd Barrett (right) with Marc Tessier and Mary Wing, Formentera, Spain, 1969: (insets) publicity for Samson's novel plus Waters' tour film, and Floyd's.

"david gilmour thinks because i left the band in 1985, he owns pink floyd and i should keep my mouth shut..."

roger waters



Roger Waters @rogerwaters · May 19

An announcement from me. And when I mention the @pinkfloyd we

mean the Facebook page and all the rest.

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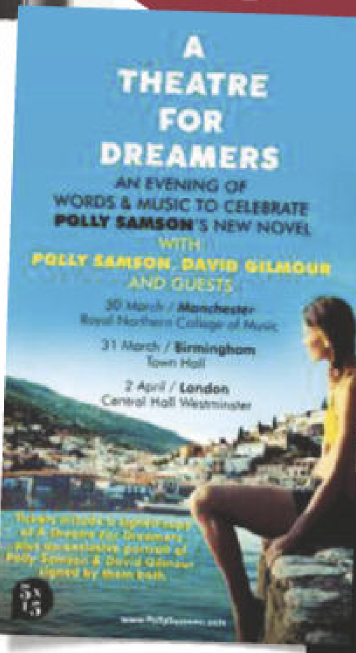
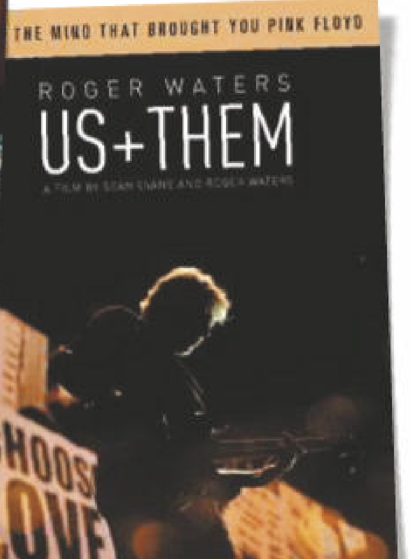


A THEATRE FOR DREAMERS
AN EVENING OF WORDS & MUSIC TO CELEBRATE POLLY SAMSON'S NEW NOVEL
WITH POLLY SAMSON, DAVID GILMOUR AND GUESTS
30 March / Manchester Royal Northern College of Music
31 March / Birmingham Town Hall
2 April / London Central Hall Westminster



PINK FLOYD
DELICATE SOUND OF THUNDER
IN CINEMAS ONE NIGHT ONLY
THURSDAY 15TH OCTOBER

STARING INTO THE camera, fingertips stroking his beard, Roger Waters looked perturbed. The date was May 19, 2020, and Pink Floyd's estranged bassist was berating their guitar player and singer, David Gilmour, via Twitter.

Waters's 5:41-minute video began with a complaint about pinkfloyd.com and its associated social media not publicising his solo work. Seconds later, he'd reopened old wounds: "David Gilmour thinks because I left the band in 1985, he *is* Pink Floyd and he owns Pink Floyd and I am irrelevant and should keep my mouth shut…"

So it carried on, until Waters went for the jugular. With a thin smile and nervous cough, he claimed fans were annoyed about him being ignored while Floyd's official channels helped promote A Theatre For Dreamers, Gilmour's spouse, writer Polly Samson's latest novel. "This is wrong," he groaned. "We should rise up… or just change the name of the band to Spinal Tap." Floyd followers could be forgiven for their feeling of *déjà vu*.

As a musical partnership, Gilmour and Waters had scaled epic heights. The contrasts the two men presented – the anger, ambition and intellectual rigour of Waters' songs and concepts; the contemplative and cathartic qualities of Gilmour, embodied in the bell-like peal of his guitar – resolved in music of great grandeur and emotional weight.

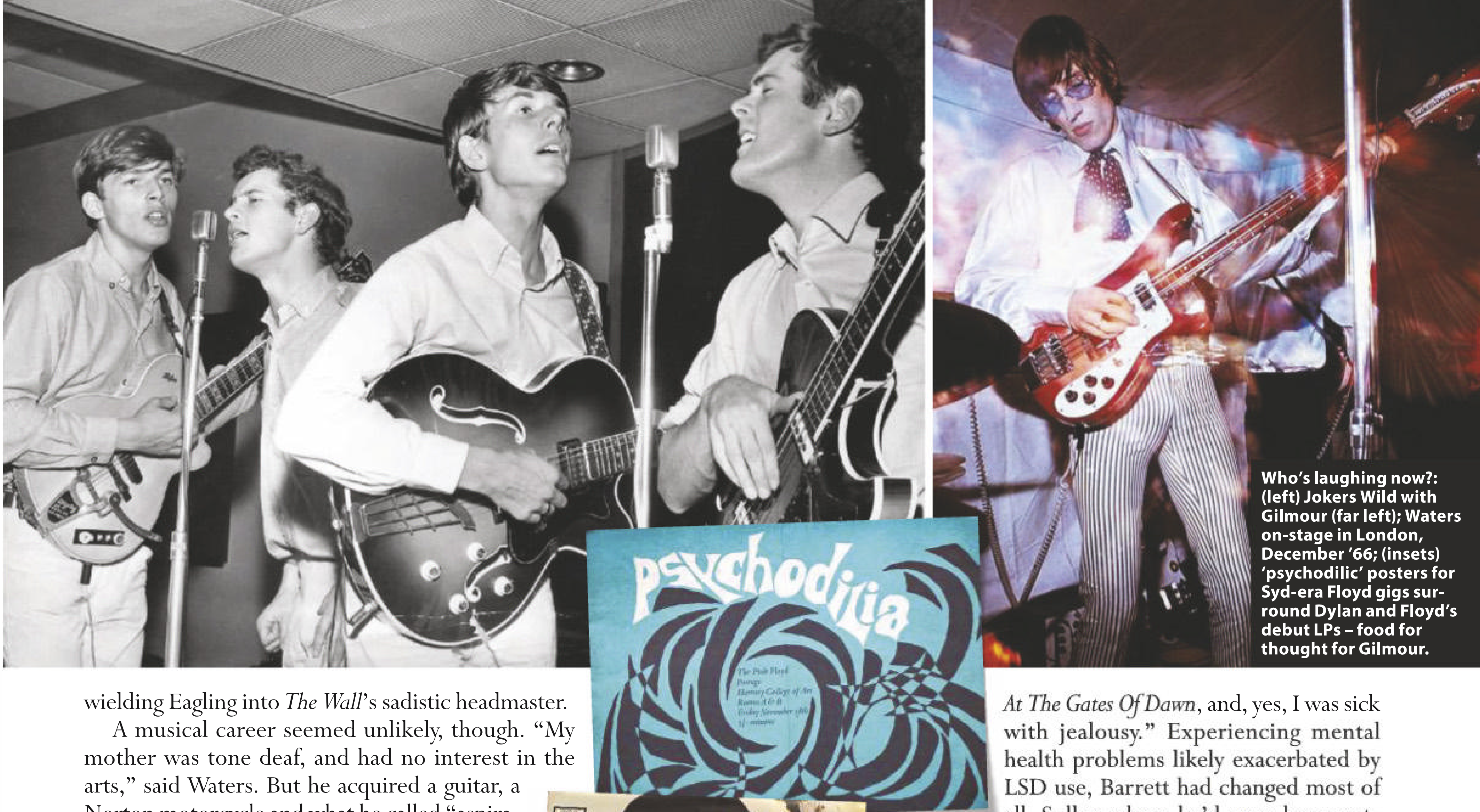
The Syd Barrett Pink Floyd had been unique – the vehicle for one man's extraordinary version of reality – but post-Syd Floyd belonged equally to Waters, who made it happen, and Gilmour, who made it popular. To what extent *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, *Wish You Were Here* and *The Wall* – the Floyd albums that conquered the world – were the products of their friction, or harmony, or both, is moot, but the volatility of their relationship in and out of the band, is not.

In October this year, Waters released Us + Them, a concert film of his 2017-2018 solo tour, on DVD and Blu-Ray. A month later, came a remixed version of Pink Floyd's *Delicate Sound Of Thunder* live album and film, recorded in 1988, in the immediate aftermath of Waters' departure from the band. Both releases included some of the same songs; both illustrate the turmoil at the heart of a once fruitful partnership.

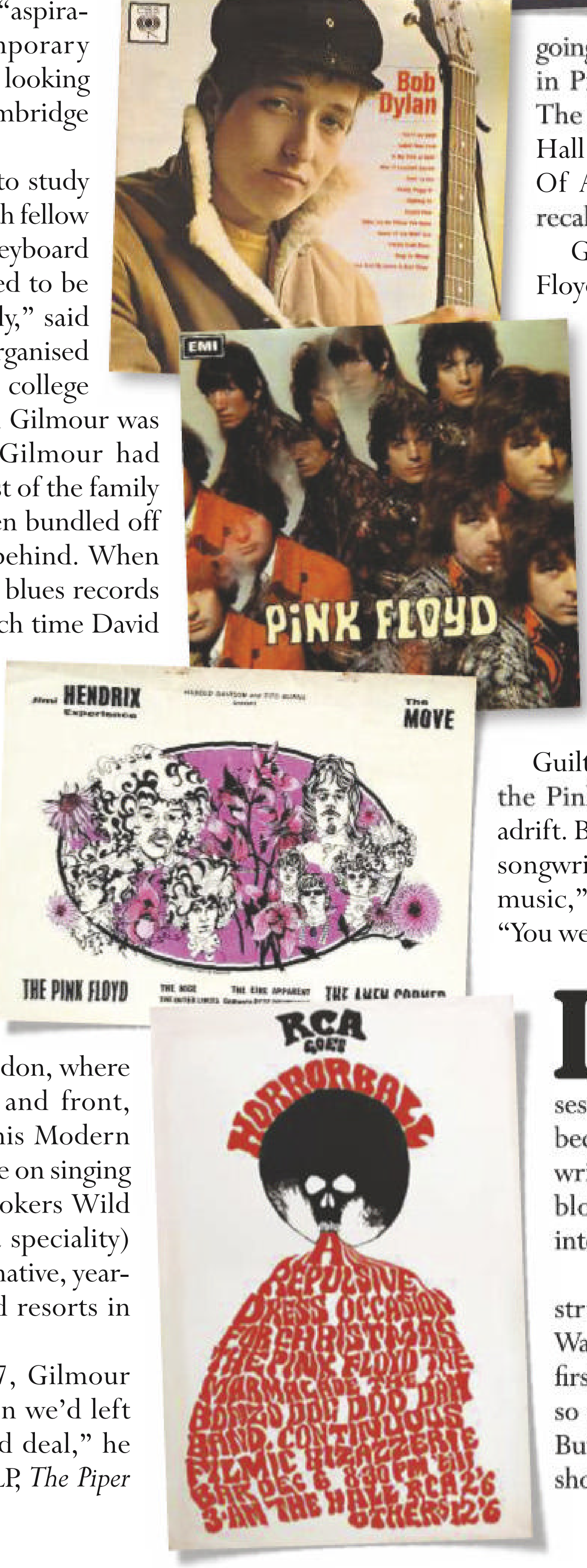
"There's this strange magic," said David Gilmour in 2014, describing Pink Floyd's ability to make music together while struggling to look each other in the eye. With shots still being fired over half a century since he and Waters first worked together, one wonders what went wrong – and was it ever right?

"DAVE GILMOUR AND I are not mates, we never were and I doubt we ever will be," stated Roger Waters in 2017. But they were thrown together by an accident of birth. Both grew up in Cambridge, and in a world of academia. Waters was the son of schoolteacher Mary and army lieutenant Eric, whose death at the Battle Of Anzio would have a profound impact on his son's future outlook, politics and songwriting. Gilmour's parents were Cambridge University zoology lecturer Doug and teacher-turned-film editor Sylvia. Waters, two-and-a-half years Gilmour's senior, attended the Cambridgeshire High School For Boys, known as 'The County', while Gilmour enrolled at its rival, the Perse School For Boys. Waters' combative nature was evident early on. The County's principal, Arthur Eagling, caned him multiple times, and he was discharged from the Combined Cadet Force for refusing to attend drills and declaring himself a conscientious objector. The die was cast. The boy who'd lost a father he never knew in World War II was already challenging authority, and would turn the cane-

Getty (2), Twitter, The Christine Smith Collection



Who's laughing now?: (left) Jokers Wild with Gilmour (far left); Waters on-stage in London, December '66; (insets) 'psychodilic' posters for Syd-era Floyd gigs surround Dylan and Floyd's debut LPs – food for thought for Gilmour.



wielding Eagling into *The Wall*'s sadistic headmaster.

A musical career seemed unlikely, though. "My mother was tone deaf, and had no interest in the arts," said Waters. But he acquired a guitar, a Norton motorcycle and what he called "aspirations of beatnik cool". One contemporary remembered the young Waters, "always looking rather cross, and zooming around Cambridge on his motorbike."

Waters moved to London in 1962 to study architecture, forming an R&B group with fellow students, drummer Nick Mason and keyboard player Rick Wright. "I realised I wanted to be closer to the centre of things musically," said Waters, who started playing bass, and organised the nascent Pink Floyd's bookings for college balls. Back in Cambridge, 16-year-old Gilmour was living away from his family. Doug Gilmour had accepted a job in New York, taking most of the family with him. David, who'd previously been bundled off to boarding school, aged five, stayed behind. When the family returned it was with several blues records and the first Bob Dylan album, by which time David had already taken up guitar.

Gilmour, Waters and futureCounty pupil Roger 'Syd' Barrett had attended a Saturday-morning art class together as children, but didn't get to know each other properly until their teens. Barrett was another aspiring guitarist, and he and Gilmour became closer at the Cambridgeshire College Of Arts & Technology, where they'd play music together during lunchtimes.

In summer 1964 Barrett took up a place at Camberwell Art School in London, where he would eventually hook up with, and front, Waters' group. Gilmour abandoned his Modern Languages A-level course to concentrate on singing and playing guitar with covers band Jokers Wild (Everly Brothers and 4 Seasons hits a speciality) with whom he would embark on a formative, year-long European trip, playing clubs and resorts in France and Spain.

Returning home in summer 1967, Gilmour found that much had changed. "When we'd left Cambridge, Floyd hadn't got a record deal," he told MOJO. "Then I heard their first LP, *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn*, and, yes, I was sick with jealousy." Experiencing mental health problems likely exacerbated by LSD use, Barrett had changed most of all. Sullen where he'd once been outgoing, he had also become an erratic on-stage presence in Pink Floyd. Gilmour saw the group supporting The Jimi Hendrix Experience at the Royal Albert Hall in November and headlining the Royal College Of Art soon after. "They were awfully bad," he recalled. "Incredibly undisciplined."

Gilmour received a half-invitation to join Pink Floyd after the RCA gig: "Nick Mason said, 'If we said we were looking for another guitarist, would you be interested?'" But a formal offer didn't arrive until January 1968, made by a mutual friend rather than a band member. "It was put about in a very strange way," said Gilmour, foretelling communication issues that would later prove typical.

Gilmour's reputation preceded him. "Dave was already a bit of a star with Jokers Wild," recalled Waters, "and did a great Jimi Hendrix." Initially, Floyd wanted him to cover for Barrett on-stage. But after playing half-a-dozen gigs as a five-piece, Gilmour replaced him permanently.

Guilt over Barrett's dismissal flits like a ghost through the Pink Floyd story. But his absence also cast them adrift. Barrett was their psychedelic poster-boy and main songwriter. But had he been the leader? "Syd was the music," said Floyd's former co-manager Peter Jenner. "You went to Roger for the business."

IN SPRING 1968, WATERS INSISTED THE band carry on, but not because of any great idealism. "Turn up, tune in, fuck off," was his assessment of psychedelia, and scoffed at the notion of becoming a songwriter: "I had no idea I would ever write songs. I'd always been told at school I was bloody hopeless at everything." But he had no intention of giving up and becoming an architect.

Gilmour was equally stubborn, but initially struggled to define his role. He was also irked by Waters' bullish attitude. "I walked out of one of the first rehearsals," he told this writer. "Roger had got so unbearably awful, in a way I'd later get used to. But I don't think the band had fixed ideas of what I should do or how I should do it." ➢

Fleeting glimpse: (left, from left) Waters, Nick Mason, Gilmour, Rick Wright before a show in Kagawa, Japan, August 6, 1971; (below) Floyd on-stage at Knebworth, July 5, 1975; (bottom, from left) long-suffering Bob Ezrin, John Leckie, Michael Kamen.

≺ Gilmour had joined in time to contribute to their second album, *A Saucerful Of Secrets*, but his musical gifts were underutilised as he conjured dissonant noises rather than guitar solos on the title track: "I can't say I fully understood what was going on. It wasn't music for beauty's sake or emotion's sake."

The later suggestion that Gilmour and the classically-trained Rick Wright were Floyd's real musicians has always irritated Waters, but it was partly true. "No, I never learned music," he told MOJO in 2007. "I still don't consider myself a musician in that sense." Instead, Waters became a fount of ideas and lyrics, and encouraged Floyd to experiment: recording 1969's art-house movie soundtrack *More* and using found sounds and visual effects on-stage. It was the kernel of what he later called "electric theatre"; a dummy run for *The Wall* stage show. But Gilmour was unsure. "We were floundering," he said.

Despite his misgivings, Waters was soon the group's most confident writer. For 1969's part-live/part-studio set, *Ummagumma*, he insisted each band member compose a solo piece. Gilmour had previously written a song in France, but told MOJO he was "too ashamed" to discuss it. He asked Waters to write lyrics for his *Ummagumma* contribution, The Narrow Way: "But Roger said, 'No, do it yourself' – and put the phone down."

In the end, Gilmour's choirboy vocal and bluesy guitar were smothered in divebombing sound effects, as if its composer was afraid to be heard. "I found it excruciating," he said. "It wasn't until things like Fat Old Sun [on 1970's *Atom Heart Mother*] that I was giving properly of myself."

But the pair quickly became co-dependent. "Roger had ideas, vision and ambition," explained Nick Mason. "David was into form and shape." Future Radiohead producer John Leckie observed their relationship while engineering 1971 long-player *Meddle*. "Roger took command and sat at the desk, and Dave always objected and was grumpy," he told this writer. "I was different now," confirmed Gilmour. "I was loud and bolshie and letting them know I was there."

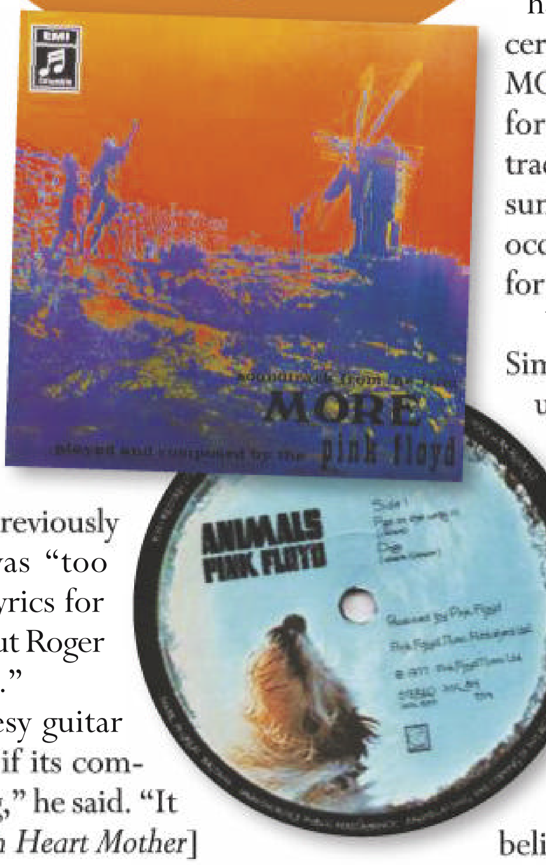
Pre-1973, Pink Floyd had been Britain's biggest cult band, stars of EMI's progressive imprint, Harvest. But their eighth album, *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, changed everything. The 29-year-old Waters had proposed a suite of songs exploring the "pressures, difficulties and questions" raised by growing older. "That was always my fight in Pink Floyd," he said. "To drag it kicking and screaming from the borders of space to my concerns, which were more political and philosophical."

Gilmour supported his fight, but didn't contribute to the writing as much as he would have liked. "I wasn't feeling that inspired, but I certainly pulled my weight in the studio," he told MOJO. In a reversal of their earlier roles, he also forced Waters to sing lead vocals on its closing tracks, Brain Damage and Eclipse: "Roger rarely sung leads as he was so shy about his voice. On occasions he would try and persuade me to sing for him and I wouldn't."

Waters' raw voice was ideal for these songs. Similarly, Gilmour negotiated Waters' desperately un-funky time signature on Money and conjured a melody out of thin air. Then they butted heads over how it should sound. Waters wanted the LP's spoken-word segments, in which band roadies and familiars discussed, among other topics, insanity ("I've been mad for fucking years") and violence ("a short, sharp shock…"), higher in the mix, but Gilmour disagreed. "Roger and I had huge rows," said Gilmour. "But they were about passionate beliefs in what we were doing. I liked the voices on *Dark Side*… but sometimes Roger would be willing to sacrifice musical moments to get his message across."

The Beatles' *White Album* engineer, Chris Thomas, refereed the final mix; mediating like a parent between two bickering siblings. *Dark Side*… arrived in spring 1973 and gave Pink Floyd their first US Number 1. It was the best union so far of Waters' vision and ambition with Gilmour's form and shape. On their good days, the pair recognised it too. "Roger was the guy that had the ideas and concepts," reasoned Gilmour. "I was the better musician. We recognised each other's strengths and weaknesses."

> "roger and i had huge rows. he would be willing to sacrifice musical moments to get his message across."
> david gilmour



Koh Hasebe/Shinko Music/Getty Images, Camera Press/Heilemann, Getty (4), Shutterstock

Welcome to the machine: backstage in Birmingham, 1974, Waters, Gilmour and, reflected bottom right in mirror, Wright; (right) Gilmour and Waters in harmony for The Wayll, 1981.

BUT THE ENTENTE WAS SHORT-LIVED. IN THE WAKE of *Dark Side*'s multi-million sales, Waters was quick to diagnose his bandmates' complacency and slow to tire of throwing it in their faces. "We should have split up then," he told this writer in 1992. "We'd reached the point we'd been aiming for since we were teenagers. The only reason we stayed together was fear and avarice."

Reasonably enough, Gilmour disagreed. "We all had to assess music and life," he would note, "and I'd already reached the assessment that, I am a musician and I like being a musician."

Making the follow-up, 1975's *Wish You Were Here*, was difficult on several counts. Studio engineers remember the band listlessly firing an airgun at a dartboard while experiencing what Waters called "creative inertia". When he grew tired of that, Waters took verbal pot-shots at the diffident Rick Wright. "I'm like a mule," said Gilmour. "Knock me down, I get up again. Rick was thinner-skinned, and he got knocked down and didn't find it so easy to get up."

Somehow, though, they found the perfect symbiosis on Shine On You Crazy Diamond, a slow-burning tribute to poor old Syd Barrett. Yet the two main protagonists still couldn't agree. "I think *Wish You Were Here* is a near-perfect album," said Gilmour. "Some of it goes on a bit," countered Waters.

The album sustained Pink Floyd's upwards trajectory, but its success confirmed Waters' belief that he, and he alone, was the brains behind the band. On 1977's bleakly brilliant *Animals*, he shared a writing credit with Gilmour on one song, Dogs. Later, Waters said his bandmates accepted his dominance: "If you're lucky enough to be in a band with somebody who can write something that isn't complete crap, you don't rock that boat. You go, 'Phew! Thank God for that. He's written another song.'"

"It was never agreed that anyone should be the leader, but none of us objected to Roger driving it forward," insisted Gilmour. "I wouldn't have dreamed of putting my oar in about the concept and the lyrics. But I was never willing to relinquish my equality in musical terms." The result was a kind of brooding stasis – the scene backstage at shows around this time described by a friend of the band as "a whirlpool of psychic agony".

But with Gilmour and Wright bringing fewer ideas to the table, Waters had free rein. Two years after *Animals*, he presented them with his concept for *The Wall*, a semi-autobiographical tale of a rock star in mental distress. Floyd recorded the album, initially in France, in a toxic environment riven with creative differences. Wright barely contributed and would be gone by the end of the sessions. Meanwhile, Waters explored his neuroses – about his father's death, Syd Barrett's decline and the teachers who'd damned him as "bloody useless" – while Gilmour and co-producer Bob Ezrin strove to accommodate the message without sacrificing the music.

Completing the album in Los Angeles, Gilmour and Waters locked horns over its standout track, Comfortably Numb. There were two mixes: Gilmour wanted the rougher version; Waters the softer one. After a blazing row in a Beverly Hills restaurant, they settled on Waters' choice, but with Gilmour's grand-finale guitar solo dropped in from the rougher mix. "I'm not sure if you played me those backing tracks I'd know the difference now," said Gilmour, 20 years later. "But it seemed incredibly important at the time."

The Wall was a hit, with its live show a ground-breaking piece of electric theatre. For Gilmour, though, it represented "the last embers of mine and Roger's ability to work together."

Wright had left after *The Wall*, been re-hired as a salaried musician for the tour, and was gone again when his bandmates recorded 1983's *The Final Cut*. Waters' swansong Floyd album voiced his opposition to prime minister Margaret Thatcher and the recent Falklands War. Gilmour was sympathetic to the message, but didn't rate the music, some of which had previously been rejected: "If these ideas weren't good enough for *The Wall*, why were they good enough now?"

The atmosphere in the studio was icy, with Gilmour and Waters sometimes working in different rooms with different engineers. "It was a miserable time," said Gilmour, "and Roger was the one making it miserable."

The Final Cut's orchestral arranger Michael Kamen summed up the mood perfectly. He recalled spending hours listening to Waters trying to pitch his vocals. Eventually, convinced he was being punished for some misdeed in a past life, he started obsessively writing the words "I must not fuck sheep" over and over on a pad of paper.

The Final Cut reached Number 1 at home, but was a hollow victory. Gilmour and Waters disappeared to record solo albums. Gilmour's accomplished, if rather slight *About Face* arrived in March 1984. Waters' *The Pros And Cons Of Hitch Hiking*, a largely tune-free psycho-sexual concept LP, followed a month later. Both highlighted their respective strengths and weaknesses, while the sales proved neither musician could match Pink Floyd's pulling power.

IN OCTOBER 1985, WATERS TOOK OUT A HIGH COURT injunction to prevent the others using the Pink Floyd name. Two months later, he told EMI he was quitting the band. Waters' actions related to his ongoing dispute with band manager Steve O'Rourke. The court case wouldn't be heard for 12 months, though, and Gilmour and Mason announced their plans to continue as Pink Floyd.

"Roger said, 'You'll never get it together to make a record,'" recalled Gilmour. "But I'd been working on ideas while Roger decided whether he was going to fuck off into the ether or not." "Roger saying that to David was like a red rag to a bull," noted Mason.

Gilmour's new collaborators soon included *The Wall*'s producer Bob Ezrin and a returning Rick Wright, whose contributions, along with Mason's, were mostly excised from the final record. "Both ➢

Signs of life: Wright, Mason and Gilmour during the Momentary Lapse Of Reason tour, 1987; (insets) 1984 solo albums and the subsequent band release.

"my refusal to kowtow to what was going down with roger was destructive to pink floyd staying together."
david gilmour

≺ Rick and Nick were pretty ineffective back then," said Gilmour, who blamed Waters for destroying their confidence as musicians.

Songs came together on Gilmour's new houseboat studio, Astoria. Its bucolic setting on the River Thames was undermined by persistent phone calls from lawyers, and failed to inspire a concept or much in the way of lyrics. "It was tough not having Roger there, to say, 'Shall we do this or *this*?'" admitted Gilmour, who co-wrote three songs with lyricist Anthony Moore, previously with the experimental groups, Henry Cow and Slapp Happy.

An amused Waters watched from the sidelines and told Bob Ezrin that "the muffins" were doomed to failure. But when Floyd announced their intention to tour the US, he threatened to sue any promoter who put tickets on sale. Gilmour and Mason stumped up their own money as a guarantee. When the first show in Toronto sold out, promoters came flocking.

DAVID GILMOUR
ABOUT FACE
PINK FLOYD

The new Pink Floyd album, *A Momentary Lapse Of Reason*, was released in September 1987. There wasn't a concept, but there were lots of guitar solos and vogueish MIDI sequencers. "We got trapped in this '80s thing, and were a bit too thrilled with the technology," said Gilmour. Seventeen session musicians were listed in the credits, and when Gilmour remixed the album for 2019's *The Later Years* box set, he reinstated Mason's and Wright's original parts to "restore the creative balance".

Waters declared the new Floyd a "clever forgery", but it reached Number 3 in the UK and US, while his latest solo LP, *Radio K.A.O.S.*, only just made the Billboard 50. Waters and Floyd soon found themselves touring the States simultaneously, but in very different-sized venues.

"I'm out on the road in competition with myself – and I'm losing," grumped Waters, who lashed out at his old bandmates with a $35,000 writ to stop them using his copyrighted flying pig from the *Animals* artwork. Floyd changed its sex and gave their new inflatable boar a pair of oversized testicles.

Getty (4), Twitter

THE PIG FIASCO ENCAPSULATED HOW PETTY THE feud had become. The gist of their respective criticisms never changed: Waters, always the more bellicose in press interviews, mocked the new Floyd's songwriting ("Gilmour's lyrics are very third rate"), while they derided his perceived lack of musicianship.

"I played the bass on at least 50 per cent of Floyd's recorded output," said Gilmour.

"I think the problem is Roger doesn't really respect David," said Mason in 2018. "He feels that writing is everything, and everything should be judged on the writing rather than the playing."

While Gilmour never stopped crediting Waters for his ideas, he raged at his lack of respect for his bandmates' contributions, and, above all, his attempt to 'retire' Pink Floyd. "He is an egomaniac," said Gilmour in 1992, "and very good at belittling people."

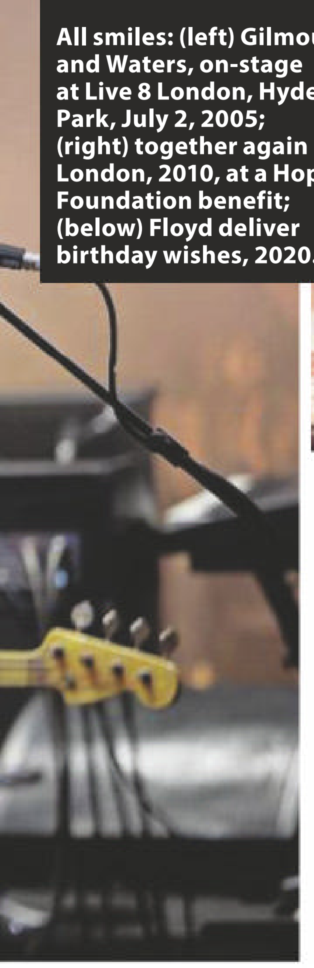
Ultimately, "the muffins" won the war. *A Momentary Lapse Of Reason* and its subsequent tour (which played to 4.25 million people over two years) proved audiences accepted Pink Floyd without Roger Waters. "I also realised no court in the land cared about what is or isn't Pink Floyd," admitted the bassist.

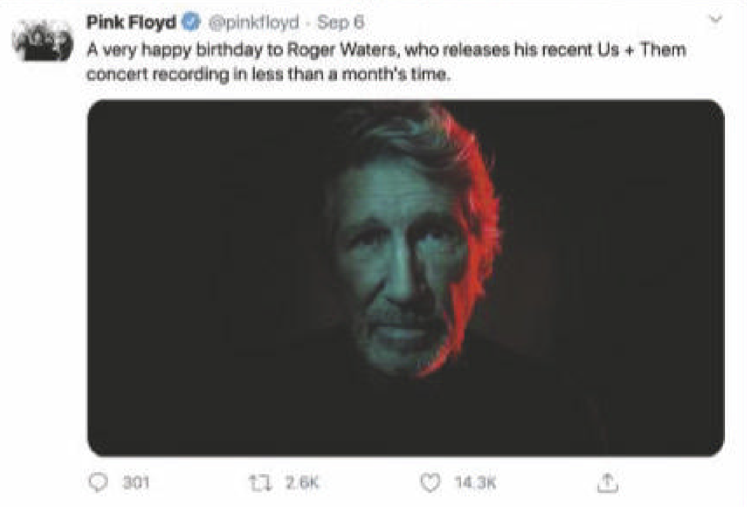
Two days before Christmas 1987, Gilmour, Waters and an accountant met on the Astoria. A legal document was drawn up, allowing Gilmour and Mason to use the Floyd name in perpetuity, but giving Waters control of certain assets, including *The Wall*.

As vindicated as he felt then, Gilmour sounded philosophical when revisiting this era in 2008. "I am pig-headed, but often your best characteristics can also be your worst," he told MOJO. "My refusal to kowtow to what was going down with Roger was destructive to Pink Floyd staying together."

Gilmour, Mason and Wright made one more Floyd album, 1994's *The Division Bell*, before Gilmour put the band on ice. Even a warmly-received reunion with Waters for 2005's Live 8 charity concert couldn't rekindle the flame. The performance was spine-tingling; the body language excruciating. Promoters threw money at the quartet to play more shows (as much as $250 million, according to one rumour), but Gilmour wouldn't budge, claiming he'd been offered the same amount to tour Pink Floyd "with or without Roger".

"Maybe Dave doesn't get how important the symbiosis between





Pink Floyd @pinkfloyd · Sep 6

A very happy birthday to Roger Waters, who releases his recent Us + Them concert recording in less than a month's time.

301 2.6K 14.3K

All smiles: (left) Gilmour and Waters, on-stage at Live 8 London, Hyde Park, July 2, 2005; (right) together again in London, 2010, at a Hoping Foundation benefit; (below) Floyd deliver birthday wishes, 2020.

us was during the golden years," suggested Waters, mischievously. "It was a very, very special thing." The following year, Waters toured *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, with posters billing himself as 'The Creative Genius Behind Pink Floyd'. His campaign to reclaim the legacy had begun.

Waters has continued to revisit the catalogue with lucrative results. He staged a mammoth global production of *The Wall*, becoming the third most profitable solo artist of 2012 (behind Madonna and Springsteen), before scoring again at the box office with 2017-18's Us + Them. On both tours, Waters mouthed the lyrics, while hired hands sung what had been Gilmour's lead vocals. The message was clear: it was *me* all along.

Since Live 8, David Gilmour has released two solo albums, *On An Island* (2006) and *Rattle That Lock* (2015). In contrast to Waters' Cecil B. DeMille approach, Gilmour's live shows subscribed to Frank Zappa's edict: shut up 'n play yer guitar. In 2014, he oversaw the reworked Floyd outtakes collection, *The Endless River*, dedicated to Rick Wright, who'd died in 2008.

One song, Louder Than Words, with lyrics by Polly Samson, addressed the group's dysfunctionality. "Roger and David were like a bickering old divorced couple," Samson told the Irish Times.

In a quaint twist, Nick Mason, who compares his role in Pink Floyd to that of a ship's cook, has also bagged a piece of the legacy. Pre-Covid, Nick Mason's Saucerful Of Secrets were doing brisk business, playing early Floyd hits and misses.

"I'm having the time of my life," the drummer cheerily informed MOJO.

In 2017, Roger Waters told this writer he'd changed his mind since we last spoke. "I'm glad we didn't break up after *The Dark Side Of The Moon*. Going through all that pain we came up with some good work – *Wish You Were Here*, *Animals*, *The Wall*…"

Gilmour agreed. "Whatever bitching we do – and we did – it was a fantastic ride," he said, before adding, "Ninety-five per cent of the time."

NEITHER GILMOUR'S NOR PINK FLOYD OFFICIAL channels responded to Waters' outburst in May. Then, on September 6, the group's Twitter account posted the following message: "A very happy birthday to Roger Waters, who releases his recent Us + Them concert recording in less than a month's time." Since then, normal silence has been resumed.

It's almost 53 years since Gilmour joined Pink Floyd, and 35 years since Waters left. Yet Floyd's musical legacy remains the joint property of the two men who helped create it. It's hard not to think of Wish You Were Here's lyrics: "Two lost souls swimming in a fish bowl, year after year, running over the same old ground…"

The marriage was over long ago, but neither David Gilmour nor Roger Waters can ever truly escape each other.

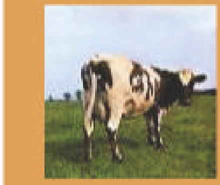
two suns in the sunset

MOJO's Floyd Wars album: a side of Daveness; a flip of Rogness. Compiled by mark blake.

david side

FAT OLD SUN

(on *Atom Heart Mother*, EMI Harvest, 1970)



Tolling church bells usher in this love letter to the bucolic East Anglian countryside. "By the river holding hands/ Roll me up and lay me down," sings Gilmour, who plays every instrument here, including the bass.

WOT'S… UH THE DEAL

(on *Obscured By Clouds*, EMI Harvest, 1972)

A sleepy vocal and keening lap steel drive this mellow entry from the soundtrack to 1972's La Vallée, a journey of naked self-discovery set in the Papua New Guinea jungle. Gilmour later revived the song for his 2006 On An Island tour.

BREATHE

(on *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, EMI Harvest, 1973)

Gilmour's is the first singing voice heard on Floyd's breakthrough LP. There's a hymnal quality to the song, as his balm-like tones urge listeners to give in to the most fundamental of bodily needs: "Breathe, breathe in the air…"

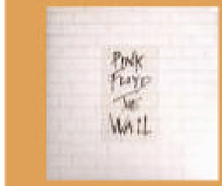
WISH YOU WERE HERE

(on *Wish You Were Here*, EMI Harvest, 1975)

Waters' lyrics partly addressed the end of his first marriage. But Gilmour vocalised his bandmate's regret, turning the song into a universal plea for understanding. The moment he starts playing along to the guitar 'playing' on the song's 'transistor radio' is one of Gilmour's – and Floyd's – finest.

COMFORTABLY NUMB

(on *The Wall*, EMI Harvest, 1979)



The song had an agonising birth, but remains a peerless example of Gilmour's musicality and Waters' lyrical grit: the call-and-response vocals, the yin and yang of their contrasting voices and, finally, that explosive guitar solo.

roger side

SET THE CONTROLS FOR THE HEART OF THE SUN

(on *A Saucerful Of Secrets*, EMI Columbia, 1968)

Peak scary Waters: menacing vocals floating over a sound collage of tympani, vibraphones and BBC Radiophonic Workshop-style effects. Waters' lyrics were pilfered from a book of late-Tang dynasty Chinese poetry.

BRAIN DAMAGE/ ECLIPSE

(on *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, EMI Harvest, 1973)

Gilmour persuaded Waters to sing *Dark Side*…'s grand finale. A wise move. His querulous tone fits lyrics such as "the lunatic is on the grass" and "you rearrange me 'til I'm sane", as snugly as a Victorian asylum straitjacket, before conveying similar angst on the closing Eclipse.

SHEEP

(on *Animals*, EMI Harvest, 1977)

Waters' Orwellian vision climaxes with the mindless sheep rising up and attacking their masters. Its composer sneering, "Meek and obedient, you follow the leader, down well-trodden corridors into the valley of steel", is brilliantly, sublimely unpleasant.

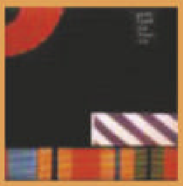
MOTHER

(on *The Wall*, EMI Harvest, 1979)

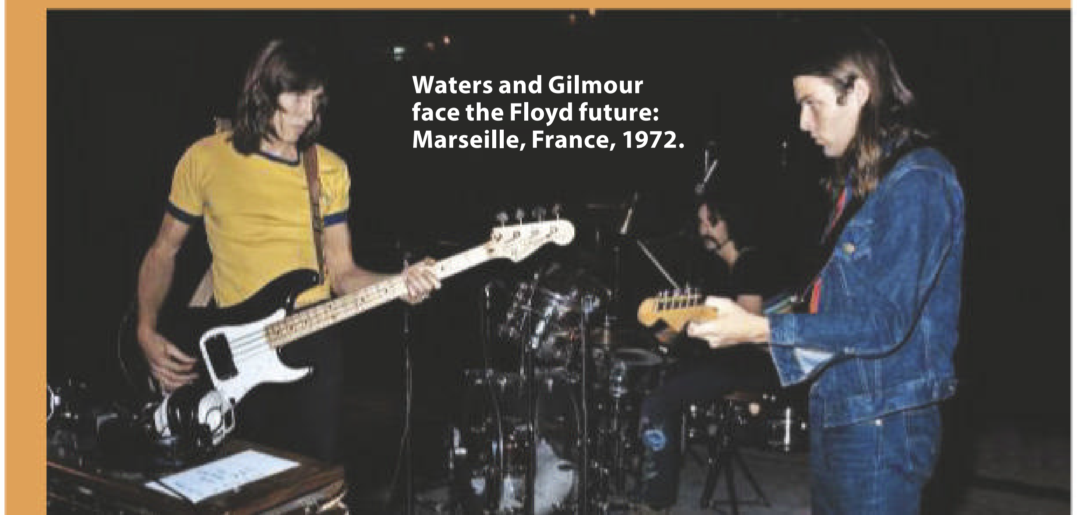
Vaguely Oedipal power ballad, with Waters as *The Wall*'s central character Pink exploring his dysfunctional relationship with an overbearing matriarch: "Mama's gonna put all her fears into you…" Impressively reworked for The Wall and Us + Them shows.

THE FLETCHER MEMORIAL HOME

(on *The Final Cut*, EMI Harvest, 1983)



Comfortably numb to his bandmates' musical wishes, Waters wrested control of his last Floyd album. Here, he barks at world leaders ("Hello Maggie! Mr Brezhnev and party…"), while Michael Kamen's orchestra and Gilmour's guitar soften the blows.



Waters and Gilmour face the Floyd future: Marseille, France, 1972.

MOJO EYEWITNESS

THE STONE ROSES' SECOND COMING

1989's *The Stone Roses* was the era-defining classic that promised a new dawn for British music. Then the group escaped their label, sacked their madcap manager, signed a new £4 million deal and released its notorious follow-up… five years later. Having battled impossible expectations, the loss of drummer Reni and a terrible lack of communication, a slow and public demise awaited. "We might not have all travelled on the same bus," they argue, "but we were musically red hot."

Interviews by **IAN HARRISON**
Portrait by **PENNIE SMITH**

Pennie Smith

Icarus and Rip Van Winkle in a car with wheels that fall off: after their first attempt is deemed too low-quality by MTV, the Roses make a second video for comeback single Love Spreads in Los Angeles, January 1995 (from left): Ian Brown, Mani, Reni and John Squire.

Brief window of opportunity: (clockwise from left) the Roses before Reni splits; the '96 line-up (from left) Brown, Aziz Ibrahim, Mani, Robbie Maddix and Nigel Ipinson; Mani and Reni bust a gut recording in Marple, May '93.

"WHAT THE FUCK WERE WE DOING SPENDING 15 MONTHS IN THE STUDIO?"

Ian Brown

Ian Brown: We figured that, because we'd come from nowhere and made such a big impact in a short time, that was going to carry us through. We never thought that it was all going to slip away and go pear-shaped, at all.

John Leckie: The first session for the album was actually when we recorded [1990 single] One Love in 1990, at Rockfield. There was a feeling of total possibility when we went in. They wanted to have a big successful record, but there was always so much else going on [the group were prevented from recording until they broke from their deal with the Silvertone label and signed with Geffen in May 1991; they also dismissed manager Gareth Evans in February 1992]. They needed a manager, a focal point to keep them in order, and a producer, and an A&R man. If he's not there, bands go off on fucking tangents.

IB: All of a sudden, you're a pop star and everyone loves you, and you start giving respect to each other and stop being so hard on each other, and we haven't got a manager. Looking back now, I can think, "Well that was a big fuck up on our part," but at the time we had just got rid of one manager and we were in no rush to get anyone else in.

John Squire: I did become a father, a long-term relationship broke down… those were things that went into the music [Squire wrote nearly all the songs on *Second Coming*]. And maybe that was something that Ian had a problem with: some of the realism, I suppose, from my life, not his… I suppose it's a lot to ask somebody to act out your roles, within the context of a pop group.

JL: It should, of course, have come down to the songs, and the songs never came. They might do a jazzy space jam with Reni, they were forever exploring, but not suddenly finding new nuggets. People say Ten Storey Love Song is great, and Breaking Into Heaven could have been a great song, but it was broken up and fractured. We spent ages doing Begging You and I thought, "This has *nothing* to do with the band." With Reni you've got the greatest drummer who ever lived, and it was just an experiment with looping, really.

Nigel Kerr: I was in touch with [tour manager] Steve Adge, and I used to have a phone call every month or so to find out how things were going down in the studio. Generally speaking, there was nothing, and it just sort of ground on for years, in different studios [the Roses recorded at Rockfield in Monmouth, used the Rolling Stones' Mobile in Ewloe, Wales, among others].

JL: I was spending all this money, £2,000 a day. I'd tell the band, and they'd just laugh and look at me, vacantly. When I called Gary Gersh at Geffen to give him an update, he'd be, "John, that's great," and I'd say, "Yeah, but nothing's getting done." I was the first person to desert the ship [at Rockfield, in July 1993]. I'd done all I could. They got Paul Schroeder down and, after he left, Simon Dawson.

IB: What the fuck were we doing spending 15 months [in Rockfield]? When we first met John Leckie, he said, "Never spend more than two weeks in a residential, because you'll go insane." We spent 15 months in one. Crackers. We spent £250,000 on recording an LP.

JS: I always think of the Rockfield session as the place where the rot sets in. That was when it became an uphill struggle. Prior to that it was slapdash, and fits and starts, but in some respects that's the way it had always been. It was only when we dug in and decided that we weren't leaving until we'd finished…

Terri Hall: I got the call: "We're ready." The radio premiere of Love Spreads [released on November 21, 1994] was quite a big event. There was still that energy and enthusiasm, but I was talking to individuals, it wasn't me talking to 'The Stone Roses'. I didn't think they'd manage whatever was coming in terms of promotion, so in a moment of madness I said, "Let's just do the Big Issue," which got me into trouble with magazines and journalists. They were attacked by the press, yes. It was a great album but after five years [*Second Coming* was released on December 5, 1994] a record is going to be an anti-climax, whatever it is.

JL: When the album came out, I thought it was all bits and pieces, and I still do. They could have made three albums in the time it took and toured the world. Or given all the money to charity and recorded it on a fucking cassette.

TH: Then Reni left on the eve of the tour [in March '95]. It was, "Shit! We're only just starting, and already one of the wheels has fallen off."

NK: There was maybe five minutes when there was the possibility that the tour wasn't going to take place. It was pretty last minute that Robbie [Maddix, drums] was called in. He did a sterling job and without him that tour wouldn't have happened. They said to me these big American managers were looking to move in, the guys that managed Guns N'Roses, and they didn't want any of that, so they asked me to go on the road with them. I was the 'Agent/Responsible Adult On The Road'. The opening show was in Oslo [April 19, '95]. Did the band smash guitars? I don't remember that.

IB: The world tour was great, you know – we hadn't played in five years and now we were playing all over the world, which is what we'd always wanted to do. You watch of some of them '95 shows – we were fucking right on it. We might not have all travelled on the same bus, but we were musically red hot on them stages.

TH: They were booked to headline Glastonbury [on June 24, '95], but I wasn't getting any response from them, so I flew out to San Francisco on my own money. It was all fine, and in the hotel, I saw this bike in John's room. He said, "I'm going out on my bike, tomorrow, do you want to come?" I said, "Not in these hills." The next evening, the tour manager calls and says John's in hospital [Squire broke his collarbone in a mountain bike accident]. The NME said they pulled Glastonbury because they bottled it,

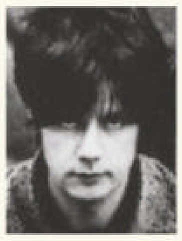
Ray Lego, Famous Pictures, Getty, Shutterstock, Courtesy Nigel Kerr, Courtesy Terri Hall, Courtesy John Leckie, Alpha Press (2)

THE STONE ROSES
Second Coming
The Stone Roses
Love Spreads
THE STONE ROSES

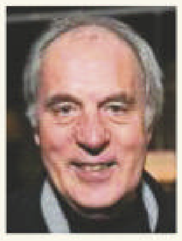
Sunburst, finish: Brown and Squire on-stage and on the home straight at the Cambridge Corn Exchange, December 1, 1995; (inset) *Second Coming*; lead single Love Spreads; gig ad with Squire's broken collarbone.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

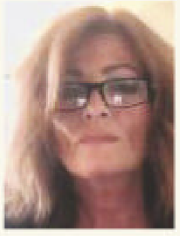
● Ian Brown (vocals, The Stone Roses)



● John Squire, (guitar, The Stone Roses)



● John Leckie (producer)



● Terri Hall (PR)

● Aziz Ibrahim (guitarist for 1996 festival dates)

● Nigel Kerr, booking agent, 'Responsible Adult On The Road'

which was not the case. I said, "I want an X-ray to send out as a press release," which was a very beautiful Stone Roses moment.

NK: There were some great shows when they got to the UK [in November 1995]. At Manchester Apollo, a very young Robbie Williams, looking worse for wear, was backstage. So were Oasis, saying, "We are the two biggest bands!" I'm pretty sure I knew that this was going to be it. They were doing it because they kind of had to. I think it was just naturally falling apart, then. They were older and their priorities were different. I've seen it many times, it wasn't unique to them.

TH: The band would leave a city in the tour bus and John would get in my car. I remember him saying,"This isn't sincere, I'm not going to do this any more." And you'd go, "Don't be ridiculous, think about your fans." There was no row, no fireworks, just this terrible, tragic drifting.

When they did finally break [Squire's last show was at Wembley Arena on December 29], I remember saying to Ian, "You and he weren't talking, why are you so surprised?" And he said, "Well that's just John. He's a bit of a moaner, he keeps himself to himself." I remember thinking, "What the fuck?" It's like the wife leaving and going, "I hate you," and you go, "I hadn't even noticed, you've just been there all the time." When they put their statements out, it was like being a divorce counsellor. John's said something very loving about the band. Ian's was angrier. I put John's out on April 1.

JS: I was relieved to get out of that situation when the tour finished. And when I started thinking about music again – writing, playing, thinking about who I was and where I was up to, being a member of The Stone Roses didn't fit in with that… at the meeting at the lawyers [in March '95], the drummer mentioned Van Halen's success without some guy who left.

IB: We'd done all this grafting and 12 years of work and this kid's left the group – hang on, why should he pull the rug out from under my feet? I want to keep making music. We're going to carry on the whole spirit of the thing as the new Stone Roses.

Aziz Ibrahim: I was helping out with demos, originally, because they couldn't get hold of John. I admired the buzz and the success, but I only got to know the Roses' music when they said, "Will you learn the set?" I learned it in a week, by ear. They gave me a DAT of a live show and the albums, and as I did that, the respect started to build. I didn't have any training for what I experienced when I joined. If Ian and Mani say they want to work with me, it's my choice to say yes. The rest is politics, history and legacy, which is to be respected.

NK: After John left, they did four dates in 1996. I suppose they wanted to because it was going to be a reasonable pay day, but there was no satisfaction. I think most of the time I was wishing it was gonna end quickly, do you know what I mean?

TH: At the Reading Festival [August 25, 1996], the press conference was just embarrassing, awful. I thought it was an attack on John Squire. Aziz said to Steve Lamacq, "Man, I was born to be in this band." It was a proper Spinal Tap moment when he said, "It took me five minutes to learn the songs."

AI: I was an idiot at that time as well. I reacted the wrong way, like I'm supposed to be as boisterous as everybody else, and be the Manc.

TH: Then, later, someone said to me, "You're gonna have to go to the dressing room, because there's a problem with the dancer." The *dancer*? I guess it was a female Cressa, I dunno. And that lovely kid Nigel [Ipinson, keyboards] was going, "Put your hands in the air!" No! This is The Stone Roses… I went back to the guest area and there were journalists *looking* at me. "Yeah, I know."

AI: My memories of the gig are being *very* busy. I've got through this without making any mistakes and without looking stressed. I did really enjoy that experience, but there are always truths behind criticisms, and I think we all could have done better. I can empathise with people. They were never gonna get what they wanted, which was John Squire and Reni on that stage.

IB: My only experience and memory of the show was 60,000 people with their arms in the air. I didn't see anyone walking away in floods of tears. Then, I heard the cassette of that gig, and I was in a different key to the rest of the group, and then the next week when I heard the reviews, I had to accept that we weren't going to be allowed to carry on. People loved me and people thought I was a legend, but that was all I had. I didn't have anything to show for being the singer of The Stone Roses [he announced the end of the band in October 1996].

AI: In all honesty I didn't want it to go on. To join an iconic band, to try and replace someone who's such an integral part, you just can't. You can be yourself – I'm a Pakistani Muslim south Asian male from a council estate in Longsight, Manchester, and my perspective is, "Will this white world give me a chance to show what I can do?" And I got completely annihilated by the press. But I think I still would have chosen the same thing, because it taught me so much. Ⓜ

John Squire was speaking in 2004: thanks to John Harris for the quotes. Ian Brown interview from 2006. Hear Aziz Ibrahim's new single The Key Of 3 at aziz.co.uk

LENNON: 1940–1980

Dream On

Forty years ago this month, the killing of **John Lennon** shocked the world into a mourning deeper than any musician had ever inspired – something on a level with Kennedys, with King. But his legacy lives on – an immortal part of the music and culture that MOJO treasures most. **John Harris** relives the impact and the aftershock, while from page 72, writers and artists salute the ways in which John Lennon changed the world, with his art and with his life.

Portrait by **David Bailey**.

"The room's so empty without you": John Lennon, 1965.

David Bailey

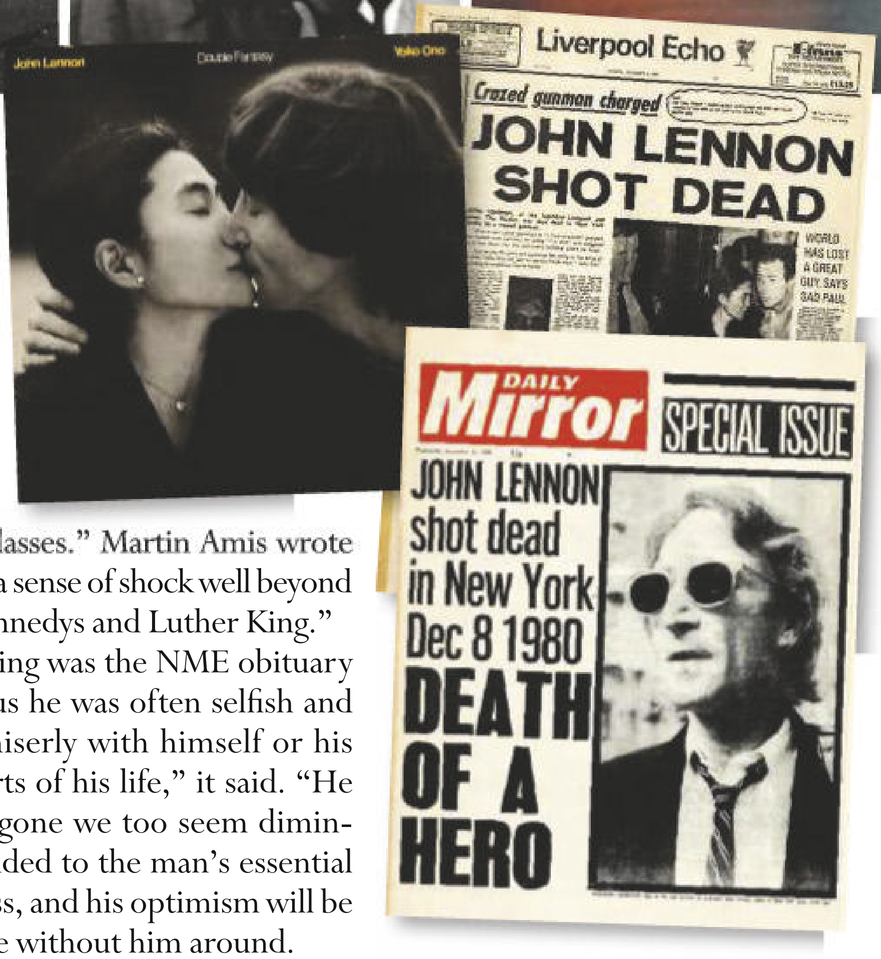
MOST PEOPLE IN BRITAIN HEARD WHAT HAD happened when they woke up on the morning of Tuesday, December 9, 1980 and switched on their radios. Overnight, the BBC World Service had broadcast the unimaginable news from the USA, which had been heard by its British listenership's usual mixture of shift-workers and insomniacs. But for the remainder of the population, awareness came after dawn. Moreover, the first time millions of people glimpsed any footage related to what had happened was when they saw the lunchtime TV news bulletins.

On BBC1, the midday news was read by Kenneth Kendall. This was the old-school BBC: stiff, stark, all about the bare facts. "John Lennon is dead," he told his viewers, "shot several times by a young American as he was going into his home in New York."

The broadcast cut to a library picture of Lennon in late 1967, before Kendall went on: "The former Beatle, who was 40, was returning home from a recording studio with his wife, Yoko Ono, when he was murdered. It was just before 11 o'clock last night, when they were entering the luxury Dakota apartment building on New York's West Side. The attacker, named by police as David Chapman [sic], aged 25 from Honolulu…" – a black-and-white picture shows Chapman shortly after his arrest – "shot Lennon with a revolver after an argument." The screen then filled with an image that made the front pages of that day's Liverpool Echo and London New Standard: Yoko, her face turned from the camera, as she was shielded from photographers by David Geffen, the impresario whose record label had just released *Double Fantasy*. He looked scared, and ashen.

That picture quickly became the embodiment of the horror and sadness coursing around the world. By contrast, the BBC's script was almost comically formal. "During the decade they were together, The Beatles had bigger record sales than any other musical act," said Kendall, as if viewers needed reminding. A run of clips then tumbled through images of New York and Liverpool, and the package ended with a snatch of I'm Losing You, crassly chosen for the appalling aptness of its chorus. That night, BBC1 screened Help!. Whatever suited the moment, it was probably not 90 minutes of The Beatles being pursued by a ridiculous death cult, intent on killing one of them. On BBC2, there was a special half-hour Old Grey ➢

BBC MID-DAY NEWS


John Lennon
Double Fantasy
Yoko Ono

Liverpool Echo

Crazed gunman charged

JOHN LENNON SHOT DEAD

WORLD HAS LOST A GREAT GUY, SAYS SAD PAUL

DAILY Mirror SPECIAL ISSUE

JOHN LENNON shot dead in New York Dec 8 1980

DEATH OF A HERO

Some time in New York: (far left) John and Yoko Ono in 1980; (insets from top) the BBC's Kenneth Kendall and clips from the news as the killer is led away; the headlines and new LP; (above) Lennon signs autographs as he leaves The Hit Factory, Times Square, August '80; (below, from left) crowds gather outside the Dakota, NYC and in Liverpool; (right) John in iconic T-shirt (see panel, p69).

≺ Whistle Test, presented by Annie Nightingale. Meanwhile, the writers of tributes and obituaries got to work, inevitably mixing sentimentality, hyperbole and more pertinent observations. The Soviet daily Pravda said Lennon's "biting and witty statements often confounded journalists and were not always liked by members of the ruling classes." Martin Amis wrote that on hearing of his death, "I felt a sense of shock well beyond what I felt at the deaths of the Kennedys and Luther King."

One of the best pieces of writing was the NME obituary by Neil Spencer. "Like most of us he was often selfish and unpleasant, but he was never miserly with himself or his soul, at least not in the latter parts of his life," it said. "He gave. He shared. And now he's gone we too seem diminished. The part of us that responded to the man's essential goodness, his dignity, his openness, and his optimism will be that much more difficult to locate without him around.

"So let's not allow our grief to turn into a misplaced despair. That was not what John Lennon's life was for; just the opposite. He said that if The Beatles had any message it was to learn to swim… 'Don't expect John Lennon or Yoko Ono or Bob Dylan or Jesus Christ to come and do it for you. You have to do it yourself.'"

NATURALLY, PEOPLE WANTED TO COME TOGETHER and fixate on the man they had lost, and all he represented. While Yoko – and five-year-old Sean, who was not told of his father's murder until Wednesday, December 10 – were inside the Dakota building, an ever-growing crowd gathered outside. They sang Lennon songs and held candles; and, whatever their intentions, made his family's grief even worse. "It began on the night of the murder," Yoko later reflected. "As it wore on through the week, it nearly drove me crazy. All day and all night, the music… after what had just happened, it was unbearable."

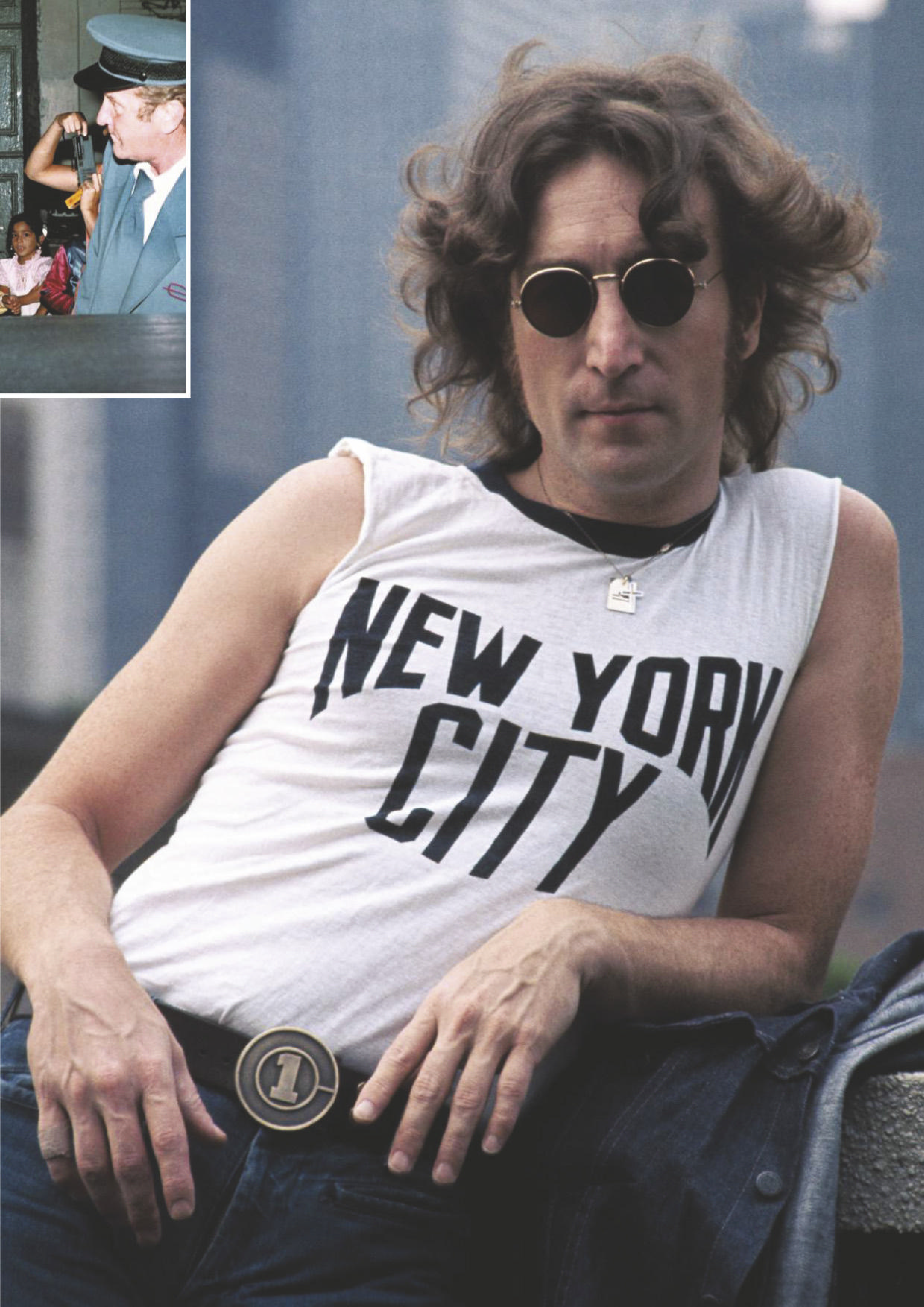
There was no funeral, nor was there to be the kind of tribute concert that would these days follow the death of any musician deemed halfway legendary. But these scenes spontaneously invented the ritual that now follows the passing of people who have become the focus of secular worship, from Kurt Cobain to Princess Diana: candles, singing, the sense that the only thing to do when confronted with tragedy is to gather in crowds.

Organised acts of remembrance happened five days later, in response to Yoko Ono's announcement of a "silent vigil" at 2pm on December 14. That Sunday in Central Park, around 50,000 people gathered; in Liverpool, there were 30,000. "I saw sorrow changing into clarity. I saw all of us becoming one mind," said Yoko. But what people also witnessed was the deep worldwide love for The Beatles, awakened once again after lying latent for the best part of a decade.

In the 10-and-a-bit years since the announcement of their split, their home country had not treated with them with the reverence of old. "No Elvis, Beatles or The Rolling Stones," The Clash had ➢

That Sunday in Central Park, around 50,000 people gathered; in Liverpool, there were 30,000. "I saw sorrow changing into clarity," said **Yoko**.

©Bob Gruen, Pacific Press/Shutterstock, Getty (4), Alamy, Mirrorpix


NEW YORK
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snarled in 1977. The following year, Capital Radio polled its London listeners for a "Hall of Fame" of the best singles of the previous 25 years: Hey Jude came in at Number 7, below 10cc's I'm Not In Love and The Moody Blues' Nights In White Satin; the next Beatles track in the rankings was Yesterday, at Number 27.

Earlier in the decade, though a belated 1975 release of Imagine had made the Top 10 in the UK singles chart, Lennon's four previous 45s had managed no placing higher than 23. Meanwhile, EMI had tried to keep The Beatles' flame burning via a desultory run of compilations – *Rock'n'Roll Music*, *Love Songs*, *Rarities* – that had included *The Beatles Ballads*, released in October 1980, which peaked in the LPs chart at 17. In Liverpool, their first manager Allan Williams had attempted to raise funds for a new statue for them; by 1979, donations from around the world totalled a princely £230.

After December 9, by contrast, The Beatles and their fans were suddenly everywhere: a reminder of how, under the surface, millions remained loyal to them and convinced of their magic, together and apart. In the murder, there was proof not just of their unimaginable level of fame, but all the sinister, psychotic things sometimes tangled up in it, something seen over a decade before in the Manson murders, and now visited on the Beatle whose lyrics and personality had always been a magnet for their fans' lunatic fringe.

The day after John's death, Paul McCartney had spent the day at AIR studios on Oxford Circus, in the company of his Wings sideman Denny Laine, George Martin and engineer Geoff Emerick. "I was so horrified," he would recall. "I just had, like, stage fright all day. Some of it was just fright, like, 'Are you next?' That was a question whipping round the three of us" – he meant him, George and Ringo – "but also the complete emptiness and finality of it."

Extra security had to be brought in to stop reporters and photographers trying to gain entry through the fire escapes. After darkness had fallen, McCartney then left, pale and clearly in shock, giving the shortest of answers to the media pack gathered outside before getting in a car to return to his home in Sussex. By way of a limp attempt to get some sort of concluding answer, one journalist said, "It's terrible news."

"Yeah," said McCartney. "It's a drag, isn't it?" As the footage makes clear, it wasn't his message to posterity – just the meaningless parting words of someone who desperately wanted to be somewhere else.

"It looked so callous in print," he later reflected. "[But] you can't take the print back and say, 'Look, let me just rub that print in shit and pee over it and then cry over it for three years and then you'll see what I meant when I said that word.' I should have said, 'It's the most unholiest of drags', and it might have been better. What I meant was, 'Fuck off! Don't invade my privacy.'"

When he got home, he said, he had "wept buckets… I controlled it all during the day, but that evening when it was on the news, and all the in-depth shit and all the pundits were coming out, trotting out their little witticisms, I did a lot of weeping." He instantly started to recoil from any mention of guns: the next day, when there was a pheasant shoot in nearby woods, his wife Linda asked the organisers to move it on.

George Harrison had been told of John's death at around 5am, by his sister Louise, who lived in Benton, Illinois. Like Paul, he spent the ensuing hours working – or trying to – at the studio in Friar Park, his huge home in Henley-on-Thames (where he would survive an attack by another deranged assailant, in 1999). Among those present was the former Fairport Convention drummer

JOHN LENNON
'IMAGINE'
Released as a single for the first time in the UK

"'Are you next?' That was a question whipping round the three of us." **Paul McCartney**

John and Yoko together in December 1968; (above, from left) Ringo Starr and Barbara Bach leave the Dakota after visiting Yoko and Sean; Paul McCartney on Oxford Street, trying to process the news.

Dave Mattacks. "I'm sure he did his crying in private, but he wasn't breaking down or in tears or anything," he remembered. "One could sense a deeper, grown-up acceptance of what had happened. One could feel a philosophical thing – the body is gone but the heart and the soul remain, I did pick up on that. We got talking about his own mortality and he said, 'Just give me a quiet burial and make sure I'm facing east.'"

In late November, Ringo Starr had shared John and Yoko's company in New York: Lennon had given him a demo of Nobody Told Me, and arranged to record it with him in early January (before that, in honour of their 40th birthdays arriving within four months of each other, John had already given Ringo a new song titled Life Begins At 40). Less than a fortnight later, he heard of John's death while in Barbados, and chartered a private plane to New York, where he and his fiancée Barbara Bach had been confronted with the scenes outside the Dakota. "I was disgusted – not with the idea that they were there, but with the fact that you had a lot of dummies in the crowd all shouting at Yoko and saying, 'Come to the windows,'" he said. Inside, he recalled, "Yoko just said, 'Well, you just play with Sean. Keep Sean busy.' And that's what we did."

Keith Richards reportedly began carrying a gun. Bob Dylan had gone "into seclusion", whatever that meant. Eric Clapton, said one of his close associates, was "very, very angry. The first thing that hit him was this incredible anger. I've never seen Eric in such a state before – it affected him so badly."

The night of the murder, David Bowie was part-way through the New York run of The Elephant Man, the play in which he took the lead role of John Merrick. He was told of Lennon's death via a phone call from May Pang, Lennon's lover during his 'Lost Weekend' in the mid 1970s, whom Bowie met as he and John worked on Fame and the version of Across The Universe released on *Young Americans*. Pang joined Bowie and his friend and secretary Coco Schwab at his apartment in the Chelsea district of Manhattan. Paul Trynka's biography Starman portrays him screaming, "What the hell, what the fuck is going on in this world?" and being "angry, devastated, numb".

"A whole piece of my life seemed to have been taken away; a whole reason for being a singer and a songwriter seemed to be removed from me. It was almost like a warning," Bowie said. Stories later circulated that Chapman had bought a ticket to see The Elephant Man and put Bowie on a list of other potential victims, along with Richards. When he retreated to Switzerland, Bowie would take a course which "trained media figures in how to deal with the public" and "mapped out danger signs in letters or other communications – latent stalkers or killers." He also hired a new bodyguard: an ex-Navy SEAL called Gary, "who was literally trained to kill."

D*OUBLE FANTASY*, SPLIT BETWEEN JOHN AND YOKO songs and presented as "a heart play", had been released on November 17, peaked at Number 8 in the UK album charts, and received many less-than-impressed reviews. In an NME piece that zeroed in on the LP's tableau of domestic bliss, Charles Shaar Murray said what the album evoked "sounds like a great life", but made for "a lousy record". Recast by events as its co-author's final artistic statement, it sped to Number 1 in the UK, US and beyond. Having previewed the album in late October, (Just Like) Starting Over followed the same trajectory, as a song that had been written as a slightly tongue-in-cheek nod to his formative influences took on an unbelievable poignancy, from the chimes before its intro, to lyrics that seemed to capture all that Lennon's shooting had taken away ("Our life, together/Is so precious, together").

In Britain, that year's Christmas chart-topper was There's No One Quite Like Grandma by the St Winifred's School Choir, but soon after, another revival of Imagine sat at the top of the singles chart for pretty much the whole of January. This writer was 11 years old – a slightly out-of-time Beatles fan – and I found the close of each week's Top Of The Pops almost unwatchable, as the video of John at the piano in 1971 was aired yet again. This was only the start. From here on in, anyone fond of Lennon and/or The Beatles could immerse themselves in a period of mourning that would last for months, so packed with music that it seemed almost frantic. ➢

Master of the controls: John and Sean show Bob Gruen the wonders of the Neve, The Hit Factory, New York, 1980.

"John Was About To Bring Such A Positive Message To The World"

Bob Gruen, photographer of the Lennons from 1971, remembers a friend and a fellow New Yorker.

WHAT JOHN valued about New York was his freedom. The freedom to go out and be a normal person. In New York you see a lot of famous people. I like to say if you see a guy who looks like Robert Redford in Des Moines, Iowa, it's not actually Robert Redford. If you see someone in New York who looks like Robert Redford, it probably *is* Robert Redford, but that doesn't mean you're gonna let him take your taxi.

When I took the pictures for the *Walls And Bridges* album in August '74, John had been in New York about four months, and sober – really on the road to recovery after his Lost Weekend. It was a good day. I'd bought the New York City T-shirt from a coupla guys who would sell 'em off a blanket near Times Square. I was struck by the simple and powerful design. I bought one and then I bought some more. Then one night I was going to visit John in the studio – this was August '73 – I brought a shirt, and I cut the arms off with my buck knife because I thought it gave it a more of a New York tough guy look. When we were on the roof I asked if he still had the shirt and he did. Of course when we took them we had no idea that it would become so iconic.

He saw a UFO that day! He was sure that he had. May [Pang] had taken pictures of it and they asked me to develop the film. I had previously given May this special high-speed film that had been developed by the US army that works in very low light – I used to use it for shooting in recording studios. The film came out completely blank – very spooky. But he was very sure he saw it. There was no question in his mind.

In 1980, I shot them recording *Double Fantasy*. The mixing desk shot? Yeah, it looks like he's introducing Sean to the world of recording, but actually he's showing me the automated faders on this new Neve console. John and Yoko were very excited about the music they were making but of course you have no idea how it will be accepted. It wasn't 'til November when the good reviews started coming in, and it was up the charts… he was even more excited about that. He didn't even care that some people were calling his music middle of the road. He said, "That's OK, because I'm going down the middle of the road to the bank!"

"He didn't care that some people were calling his music middle of the road. **He said, 'I'm going down the middle of the road to the bank!'**"

I'd seen John on the Thursday and Friday night, into Saturday morning [December 6]. I was in my darkroom Monday night processing some of the pictures I took. I had a deadline of 2am to get them to the Village Voice, but I had to show them to John and Yoko first.

Around 11 the doorman in my building called me and said, "Have you got the TV or radio on? Have you heard that John Lennon has been shot?" Then my phone rang, and it was a friend telling me John was dead. That was about the worst four-letter word I ever heard. It was so wrong and it changed so much. John was about to bring such a positive message to the world, about the stuff he learned in the five years raising his son – about responsibility, and sobriety and diet, about the benefits of delayed gratification – and it was cut short. That's the greatest loss. He was only 40 years old. He shoulda had another 40 years of inspiring people. And we could certainly use him today.

As told to Danny Eccleston

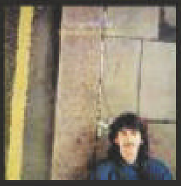
Bob Gruen's book Right Place, Right Time: The Life Of A Rock & Roll Photographer is published by Abrams.

Getty (2), Shutterstock, ©Bob Gruen

Dear John

10 songs that paid tribute to Lennon and his legacy – with mixed results.
By **John Harris**.

George Harrison
All Those Years Ago
(from Somewhere In England, 1981)



The arrangement has rather dated, but in every other respect, George's quickly-released tribute didn't put a foot wrong. "You point the way to the truth when you say, All you need is love," he sang; the fact that Paul and Ringo also contributed made the song a collective elegy, executed with subtlety and grace.

Yoko Ono
Even When You're Far Away
(from Season Of Glass, 1981)

Begins with Sean Lennon remembering a story his father told him, before evoking its author's grief as starkly as anything on an album that still sounds almost unbearably emotional: "Part of me/Will always be with you… It's just the way we happen to be."

Joan Baez
Where Have All The Heroes Gone/Sgt. Pepper's Band
(unreleased, 1981)

Never formally released, but performed with the Grateful Dead on December 12, 1981, in San Mateo, California, and now on YouTube. A stately acoustic thing, with somewhat crude lyrics: "I live in the age of cosmic maniacs/One of them put a bullet in your side/New York City, 1980/The day the '60s finally died."

Paul McCartney
Here Today
(from Tug Of War, 1982)

"I was kind of crying when I wrote it," said Paul. "It's like a dialogue with John." Honest and poignant – and, thanks to George Martin's string-quartet arrangement, built on the most tasteful of nods to the era of Yesterday and Beatlemania. Easily one of the most compelling things in his solo canon

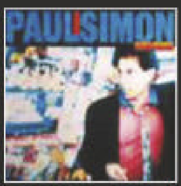
Elton John
Empty Garden (Hey Hey Johnny)
(from Jump Up!, 1982)

Lennon's great '70s friend was apparently wary of a tribute until he saw this nicely oblique Bernie Taupin lyric, with its possible nod to Dear Prudence: "I've been calling/Oh, hey hey Johnny/Can't you come out to play?" A Top 20 hit in the US, though in the UK it only made it to 51.

Queen
Life Is Real (Song For Lennon)
(from Hot Space, 1982)

The Beatle-ish chords and Plastic Ono-esque slapback echo confirm what the title suggests, though there's no mention of its ostensible subject until the final, very Freddie Mercury-ish last verse: "Music will be my mistress/Loving like a whore/Lennon is a genius/Living in every pore."

Paul Simon
The Late Great Johnny Ace
(from Hearts And Bones, 1983)



Begins as a tribute to the Memphis-born R&B singer said to have killed himself playing Russian roulette. But then journeys to 1980: "On a cold December evening/I was walking through the Christmas tide/When a stranger came up and asked me/If I'd heard John Lennon had died."

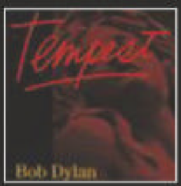
The Cranberries
I Just Shot John Lennon
(from To The Faithful Departed, 1996)

The runt of the genre. "It was the fearful night of December 8th/He was returning home from the studio late/He had perceptively known that it wouldn't be nice/Because in 1980, he paid the price." It gets no better.

Ringo Starr
Peace Dream
(from Y Not, 2010)

2003's Imagine Me There is reckoned to be a John tribute, but this upbeat slice of optimism actually mentions him. The author dreams of peace, and "just like John Lennon said in Amsterdam from his bed/One day the world will wake up to see the reality." Features Paul on bass.

Bob Dylan
Roll On John
(from Tempest, 2012)



In which Dylan incorporates Lennon into the history and myths than have intensely swirled around his music from 2001's *"Love And Theft"* onwards. Mentions "the Liverpool docks", the "red-light Hamburg streets" and the Quarrymen, and references A Day In The Life – the sound of its creator fondly recalling an old friend and foil.

John and Yoko in The Hit Fatory with DJ Andy Peebles (right) and BBC producer Doreen Davies, December 6, 1980; (insets) posthumous releases and tributes.

◄ In mid-January, sticking to a plan that had been conceived before John was killed, Woman (which Lennon had called the "Beatle track") became the next single from *Double Fantasy*, and seemed laden with even more sadness, something intensified by a video split between footage of a lone Yoko, and the pair of them in Central Park. March brought Watching The Wheels, with a sleeve photo featuring the two of them happily striding out of the Dakota. And in between came the most compelling single of all: Walking On Thin Ice, the awe-inspiring track they had been working on at the time of Lennon's death. It seemed to point to musical adventures that would now not materialise, mixing up the influence of disco and new wave, an echo of the unsettling aesthetic of Yoko's earlier solo records – plus a guitar part, like a series of exclamation marks, that John had played on his old Beatle Rickenbacker.

And so the news and noise went on. For five consecutive Sundays starting in January, BBC Radio 1 had broadcast the interview John and Yoko had taped with DJ Andy Peebles just 48 hours before the murder. In it, the couple rewound through the previous 10 years of personal and creative history, and Lennon had enthused about punk and the pleasures of living in New York ("I can go right out this door now and go in a restaurant – you want to know how great that is?"). In February, Roxy Music put out their version of Jealous Guy (but not in the US), replacing the fragility and vulnerability of the original with the kind of atmospheric schmaltz they had embraced circa 1979's *Manifesto*. By March, it was another UK Number 1.

Then, a month after Paul, George and Ringo had gathered together for the latter's London wedding to Barbara Bach, there came music from the surviving Beatles themselves.

Harrison had originally written All Those Years Ago for Starr, but the murder led him to rewrite the words, and release it himself. It featured backing vocals from Paul and Linda, and drums recorded by Ringo, and was therefore seen as a kind of collective tribute, and a major news event. The lyrics were stark, sometimes angry: "Living with good and bad/I always looked up to you/Now we're left cold and sad/By someone, the devil's best friend/Someone who offended all." But despite the pain in its words, the playful, sometimes whimsical music suggested a wish to recall better times. The single got to Number 2 on the Billboard Hot 100: a sign not just that it was an admirable piece of work, but that The Beatles' audience felt its significance. Now there was no doubt: John had left the band for good.

McCartney's own tribute song arrived a year later, on the album he titled *Tug Of War*. Here Today was an intimate, fond, impossibly moving glimpse of his and Lennon's relationship, replete with honesty ("Well, knowing you, you'd probably laugh and say/That we were worlds apart") and the remarkable tenderness of its most plainly-spoken lines: "I really loved you/And was glad you came along."

When I interviewed McCartney in 2004, he talked about what it

Getty (2), Xposurephotos.com

"A whole piece of my life seemed to have been taken away; a whole reason for being a singer and a songwriter seemed to be removed." **David Bowie**

John Lennon
(Just Like) Starting Over
John Lennon
Woman
John Lennon
Watching The Wheels
WALKING ON THIN ICE -FOR JOHN
JEALOUS GUY
a tribute
ROXY MUSIC

Shattered: an image of John Lennon's glasses.

John and Yoko, November 2, 1980.

was like to play it every night, and the story behind the song's recollection of "the night we cried/ Because there wasn't any reason left to keep it all inside": the night in 1964 when The Beatles had been stranded in Florida by a hurricane. "We got so pissed that we ended up crying – about, you know, how wonderful we were, and how much we loved each other, even though we'd never said anything," he told me.

"At least once a tour, that song just gets me," he continued. "I'm singing it, and I think I'm OK, and I suddenly realise it's very emotional, and John was a great mate and a very important man in my life. And I miss him, you know?"

The rawest musical response to the tragedy had every right to be. Yoko's *Season Of Glass* was released in June 1981. Co-produced by Phil Spector, it was full of pain and grief. Before a song titled I Don't Know Why, there are four gunshots and an awful scream. Even When You're Far Away begins with Sean recalling a story his father had regularly told him. The lyrics need no decoding: "Part of me will always be with you/Part of you is growing in me"; "You left me, you left me, you left me without words."

On the finished album, I Don't Know Why was a jagged, disconcerting song, of a piece with Walking On Thin Ice and Kiss Kiss Kiss from *Double Fantasy*. But in 1997, a reissue of *Season Of Glass* came with the version she had recorded alone the day after the murder, as the crowds outside the Dakota carried on their vigil. New York traffic can be heard in the distance, furthering an unbearable sense of someone made suddenly bereft: "The room's so empty, the room's empty without you/My body's so empty, the world's so empty without you."

On the cover of *Season Of Glass* was an image of Lennon's blood-smeared spectacles, placed next to a half-empty glass of water, and set against the Manhattan skyline. "A lot of people advised me that I shouldn't put that cover on the record," she said, "but I really wanted the whole world to see those glasses with blood on them and to realise the fact that John had been killed. It wasn't like he died of old age or drugs or something. People told me I shouldn't put the gunshots on the record, and the part [on I Don't Know Why] where I start swearing, 'Hate me, hate us, we had everything,' which was just letting those feelings out. I know if John had been there, he would have been a lot more outspoken than I was. He was like that."

BY THE 1990s, THE HORROR OF LENNON'S MURDER and the memory of the months that followed had inevitably faded. Though the worship of his memory often threatened to leave behind the messy realities of his time on earth, he was now an icon of honesty, authenticity, peace and love. McCartney inducted him into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1994; as exemplified by the Gallagher brothers, he was now worshipped by a new generation of musicians who knew nothing of the public's slide towards ambivalence after The Beatles' split, and had chosen him as their lodestar. Naturally, this reverence was focused on The Beatles, who were gradually returned to the centre of pop culture, a journey marked by staging-posts that followed Lennon's killing: McCartney's 1985 appearance at Live Aid, the CD editions of their albums released in 1987, the fondness for their post-1966 years reawakened by the neo-psychedelia of acid house.

In 1994, Paul, George and Ringo reunited to work on the *Anthology* project, and incorporate John's voice into two new singles, Free As A Bird and Real Love, both built around recordings he had made in the Dakota building. "Maybe I'm peculiar – but to me, he isn't dead," said Harrison. "When I never saw him for years before he died, I thought, 'Oh well, he's living in New York and I just haven't seen him in a while.' It's kind of still like that… We are going to meet again: it was a terrible thing that his death occurred and it made me feel terrible at the time, but in retrospect, it's just like, 'Life is just shadows, we are shadows on this sunny wall.' And that's really all it is.

"I miss John in as much as we could have a good laugh, and also, I think he was a good balance," he went on. "I miss him in the context of the band, because he wouldn't take any shit… In some ways, I'm trying to make up for that aspect of John, because I don't like to take much shit either. What I mean by that is, I want truth. John was good at that."

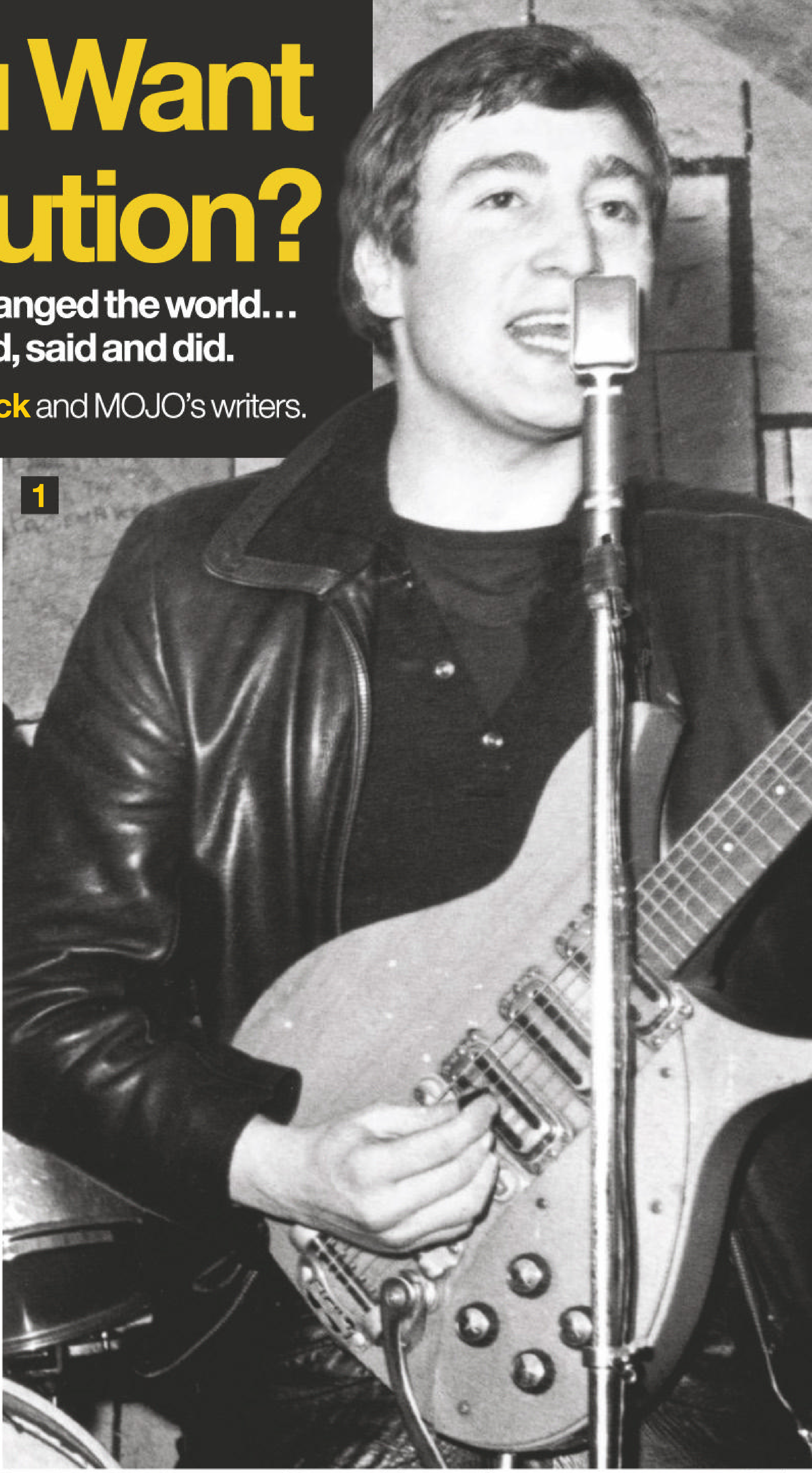
It's perhaps the aspect of John Lennon too easily forgotten, not least when we look back on the events of December 1980. From one perspective, the candles and crowds chimed with the legacy of the man who had written Give Peace A Chance and Imagine; from another, the sense of Lennon being turned into a secular saint did not square with the irreverent sceptic who had been first to insist that the dream of the '60s was over. Three days after his murder, the Los Angeles Times published an article by rock writer Lester Bangs. "Did you watch the TV specials on Tuesday night?" he wrote. "Did you see all those people standing in the street in front of the Dakota apartment where Lennon lived singing Hey Jude? What do you think the *real* – cynical, sneeringly sarcastic, witheringly witty and iconoclastic – John Lennon would have said about that?"

MORE JOHN! KLAUS VOORMANN, EARL SLICK AND MOJO WRITERS ON HOW LENNON CHANGED THE WORLD – 20 TIMES!

Say You Want A Revolution?

20 ways **John Lennon** changed the world… with what he sang, played, said and did.

By **Klaus Voormann**, **Earl Slick** and MOJO's writers.



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1 BY THE WAY HE SANG TWIST & SHOUT

Tempered in the furnaces of The Cavern and the Star-Club, The Beatles' vocal attack was the closest any British rock'n'roll singers had come to the fire, energy and expression of American originators such as Little Richard and Larry Williams, The Isley Brothers and Barrett Strong. And it was Lennon's raw, open-throated singing that sold these influential interpretations. In the summer of '63, Twist And Shout, a raucous set-closer, was the lead track on their UK Number 1 EP and made their earlier singles sound, well, British, while Lennon's vocal – the last recorded in a 12-hour February 11 session for *Please Please Me* – had a bug-eyed desperation that made an unlikely virtue of his understandably failing pipes. The Beatles' Twist And Shout is slightly slower than The Top Notes' 1961 original, and closely followed the Isleys' cover, right down to McCartney and Harrison's scream-inducing "whooos!", but in 2 minutes 33 seconds it made every previous milky British imitator of real rock'n'roll redundant. *GB*

2 WITH THE COVER OF *TWO VIRGINS*

After taping experimental sounds at his home studio on May 19, 1968, John and Yoko made love for the first time. They commemorated the collaboration by taking nude selfies. Six months later they released the tapes as an album called *Unfinished Music No. 1: Two Virgins*, using the intimate shots for the front and back covers. No superstar had ever voluntarily distributed a photograph of their genitals (now all the kids do it). The other Beatles rolled their eyes, while New Jersey authorities confiscated 30,000 albums. Beyond the dick-pic controversy, Lennon had initiated his post-Fabs life. He later created lithographs of his lovemaking with Yoko that Scotland Yard seized, wrote a sketch for Kenneth Tynan and Jacques Levy's 1969 erotic musical Oh! Calcutta! and contributed a limerick titled Why Make It Sad To Be Gay? to 1973's pioneering tome The Gay Liberation Book, all establishing him as a leader of sexual freedom. *MS*

3 WITH "RATTLE YOUR JEWELLERY"

In advance of The Beatles' appearance at London's Prince Of Wales Theatre for the Royal Variety Performance on November 4, 1963, the group had been interrogated on TV about whether they'd be scrubbing up their elocution and uncouth attire in deference to the attending Queen Mother and

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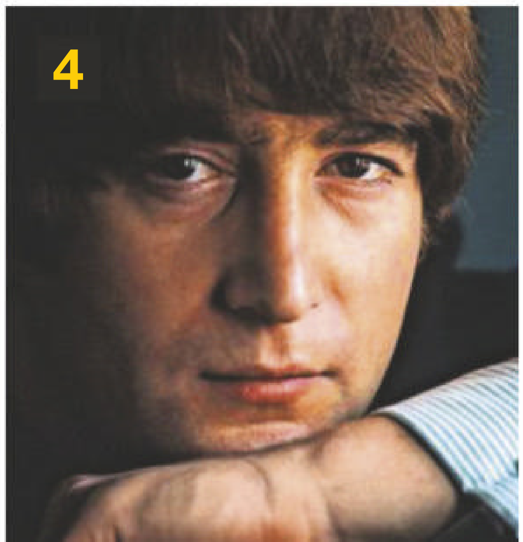

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Transcendent Lennon (from left) with Paul, 1967; life's a scream with Yoko, Butterfly Studio, NYC, April 4, 1972; just Imagine.

Shake it up baby: John Lennon on-stage at The Cavern, December 1961; (below, from left) Ringo, John, George and Paul introduced to Princess Margaret, November 4, 1963; introspective Lennon; John beds in, Amsterdam Hilton, March 1969.

> "We're not lovable moptops – we want to change everything, top to bottom."
> **John Lennon**

Princess Margaret. Lennon's suggestion, on-stage and on ratings-topping national TV, about what his 'betters' – cheekily dismissed as "the rest of you" – could do with their baubles, could hardly have been more the opposite: a younger-generational chip away at the edifice of monarchy and a step on the road to the Sex Pistols' all-cards-on-the-table anthem of dissent, God Save The Queen, 14 years later. Circa '67, a phone conversation with budding director Tony Palmer saw Lennon's vinegary radicalism prompt the explosive documentary *All My Loving*, which controversially revealed British beat pop's inner life. As Palmer recalled, "He said to me, 'Someone needs to make a movie about what this is all *really* about. We're not lovable moptops – we want to change everything, top to bottom.'" Starting at the top, which took some bottle in 1963. *AP*

4 BY EMBRACING MALE VULNERABILITY

Blues and country songs built from male sadness and insecurity long predate The Beatles. But by the early 1960s, heartbreak and introspection in post-Elvis rock'n'roll had largely congealed into camp cliché. Partly drawing on black pop benchmarks Smokey Robinson and Arthur Alexander and spurred on by the intimate artistry of Bob Dylan, Lennon was the first white rocker to vent his pain with authenticity and urgency. It started with early Beatles songs brimming with tears (Ask Me Why; It Won't Be Long; I'll Cry Instead) but achieved full impact on a run of compositions between late '64 and the summer of '65: I'm A Loser, You've Got To Hide Your Love Away, and Help!, the primal scream from the depths of his so-called "Fat Elvis" period in which, with hindsight, you hear the ground being laid for *John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band* and all angst-rock to come. *JH*

5 WITH "BED PEACE"

When Lennon and Ono turned their honeymoon bed in the Amsterdam Hilton into political theatre in March 1969, they merged her avant-garde sensibility with his surreal humour to create a pacifist retort to the streetfighting men who had dominated 1968. In May, they restaged it at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel in Montreal. No pop star had ever exploited his celebrity to promote a political cause on such a scale, and with such chutzpah. Not only did the couple invite ridicule from left, right and centre but they confronted it head-on by granting interviews from dawn to dusk. "We're Laurel And Hardy," Lennon told Radio 1. "And we stand a better chance under that guise, because all the serious people like Martin Luther King and Kennedy and Gandhi got shot." Ultimately, it was music that validated the whole enterprise. On their last day in Montreal, John and Yoko recorded Give Peace A Chance with an ad hoc choir including Timothy Leary, Allen Ginsberg, Petula Clark and representatives of three religions. The song's unpretentious humility ("All we are saying…") was their answer to every hostile interviewer who had asked what the hell they were playing at. *DL*

6 BY EXPANDING HIS CONSCIOUSNESS

Unlike McCartney, Lennon didn't seek allies in the literary and art worlds, and wasn't particularly well-read. But after being spiked by a cosmetic dentist at a dinner party, Lennon took mind-expansion very seriously, tripping daily for months and cataloguing the disorientation and euphoria in song while McCartney prevaricated. The results were *Revolver* peaks Tomorrow Never Knows and She Said She Said – and surrealist *Sgt. Pepper*-era escapades Lucy In the Sky With Diamonds and Strawberry Fields Forever. Tomorrow Never Knows was and remains key: the idea of radical change via altered states wasn't only present in Lennon's lyric but the hypnotic shape of his melody and the micro-tones of his insinuating voice – a psychedelic sketch subsequently filled in by McCartney-instigated tape loops. As a Beatle, Lennon was the most high-profile Pied Piper of his day, leading youth culture to "transcend, transform, or escape from straight society", in the words of Beatles biographer Nicholas Schaffner. Lennon's subsequent political engagement would grow from his attempt to free the mind and dissolve the ego. *MA*

7 WITH HIS GUITAR PLAYING ON WHY

Drastically more experimental than the *John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band* LP released the same day – December 11, 1970 – *Yoko Ono/Plastic Ono Band* opened with this fevered, chaotic duel between Yoko and John. Backed by Ringo Starr and bassist/*Revolver* cover artist Klaus Voormann, Lennon parried Ono's ululations with swooping, lacerating streaks of overdriven noise, scraping and mauling the strings in violent conversation with Yoko's caterwaul. The thrilling guitar abuse a clear influence on no wave's atonal noise-outs and Sonic Youth's avant-squall. *SC*

8 BY WRITING IMAGINE

Lennon often found himself being congratulated for writing The Beatles' Yesterday, which of course, he didn't. "Yesterday drove him crazy," veteran New York broadcaster and Lennon confidante Howard Smith told MOJO in 2013. "People would say, 'Thank you for writing Yesterday, I got married to it, what a beautiful song…' He was always civil. But it drove him nuts." One morning in 1971 Lennon appeared at Smith's loft in an excited state: "'He said, 'I think I finally wrote a song with as good a melody as Yesterday.'" That he had, and more. Recorded in Ascot and New York between May and June 1971, with lyrics owing a debt to Yoko Ono's 1964 poem Cloud Piece and the pair's growing belief in the potential of positive visualisations (cf. their slogan "WAR IS OVER… IF YOU WANT IT"), Imagine would grow into something unimaginable: an international anthem that carried challenging notions ("Imagine there's no heaven…") on music of elemental simplicity; a song subsequently knitted into the fabric of world culture; and ultimately, Lennon's self-penned requiem. The best- known pop song? In your face, Yesterday. *DE*

Getty (5),©Bob Gruen, Shutterstock, WENN

9 WITH **JOHN LENNON/ PLASTIC ONO BAND**

By **Klaus Voormann**, POB bassist and Beatles Hamburg associate

JOHN HAD TO WRITE THOSE SONGS. HE HAD TO record them onto tape as quickly as possible and keep them as raw as possible. People were supposed to listen to the words, listen to the song and get into the feeling. No big arrangements, no thousand guitars, just three instruments – John, Ringo and myself.

We played live in the studio and the atmosphere of us being together in the studio comes through on the record. You can feel it. This is John's experience. Whether it was singing or screaming, it was all natural, all John and only John. It didn't matter if there were a few wrong notes, they were the little things that brought it to life. And I was so happy to be in that circle. I already loved John and Ringo. I was starting to get to know Yoko and I really liked her a lot.

Since he had met Yoko, everything was improving for John. He had definitely been very lost. I had several experiences with him where he had been very down, and didn't want to live. He didn't have much joy in his life and he didn't know where he was going to, or what he was doing. He was famous and had everything you could want, but he was very unhappy. Yoko really was the start of him getting better and better.

> "He was always making jokes, like all the good clowns do, to cover up for their sadness."
> **Klaus Voormann**

I remember being with him one afternoon, a few years before. It must have been midday or two o'clock in the afternoon. I had gone to his house in Weybridge and he looked like he hadn't slept for five days – really, really bad. I don't know if he was on an acid trip, but he was absent-minded and looked really helpless. We went outside in the garden and he was picking the leaves from a bush. There was already loads of leaves all over the ground and I said, "John, what are you doing this for? The bush can't help it if you don't feel good." And then he laughed and said, "I would just like to not be here, you know?" He just wanted to be away.

Stuart Sutcliffe was John's best friend at art college. He played bass for The Beatles in the early days. He tragically died in Hamburg and when John heard about it, it upset him so much that he had an inappropriate, uncontrollable fit – he couldn't stop manically laughing and he couldn't understand what was happening to him. Inside he was heart-broken, just devastated.

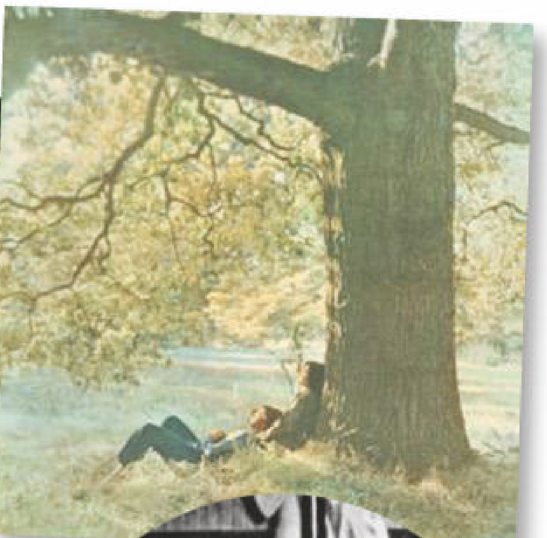
I had seen it happen several times before. In Hamburg he was often uptight and unhappy. He was always making jokes, like all the good clowns do, to cover up for their sadness. In the Star-Club he used to act up – doing the funniest things when the other bands were playing, like going on-stage like a stagehand, with a big long board or a cross and knocking everything over. Or he would dress up like an old cleaning lady and clean the microphones and wash people under the arms. Everyone was laughing – they were all having a great time, but John was so uptight, he needed to get something out of his system.

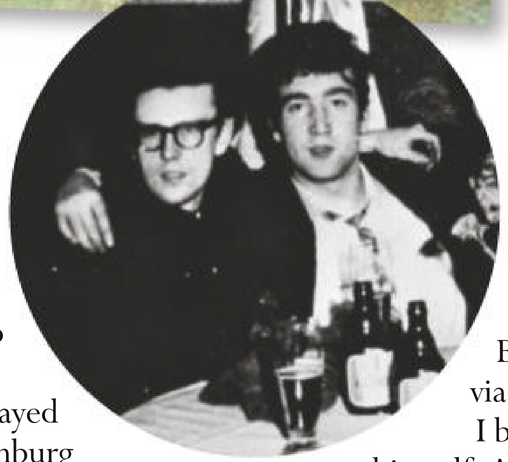
JOHN WAS ALWAYS THE PERFECT RHYTHM GUITAR player. When we first became friends he showed me how he played, dampening the strings, only playing on two strings, very sparse. Like Ringo has an intuitive talent for the drums, John had the same for the guitar, and he played crazy solos too. He never liked complicated technical soloing, just simple, very down-to-earth rhythm and great sounds.

For the *Plastic Ono Band* album, John used a guitar which was a mixture of a National guitar and an acoustic guitar – half metal, like a banjo, with sound holes which were all chrome-looking, and the rest was wood. It had a nasal sound and the one pickup was so close to the strings that when he played, the strings sometimes stuck to the magnets in the pickup. I was there when he did Working Class Hero. It was two takes cut together, just him in the studio, playing by himself, beautiful.

Whatever John did, it was very important to him to put what he was writing into the way he was singing. That's what makes a good singer. If you listen to Mother, he's hoarse when he starts – he had been screaming so much already that he really wrecked his voice in no time. It was natural with John. The fact that he had to get this despair out of his system meant he had to scream.

John had the gift of being able to express complex ideas very simply, using exactly the right words. Especially when it was about how he felt. He knew he needed to be direct and honest and raw, and that was the exact moment to capture the song. He was going through his whole life and was coming back as a baby, and there he was, saying, "I'm talking about me. Everything else is not important, I don't believe in it, the dream is over." It's a perfect statement – exactly the right words. The dream is over.





John loved The Beatles. They were all such close friends and they were all such strong individual personalities. That's what had made them so big. But by 1970, their egos and lives were all pointing in different directions. They were not so much of a unit any more and they all needed to break free. I think it must have been hard for Ringo to adjust. His old John had gone. Now he had a new John called 'John&Yoko'. Although John was happier, at work he was behaving completely differently to the way he had been before. They were still playing and talking and laughing, but there wasn't so much space for Ringo or the other Beatles in John's life any more.

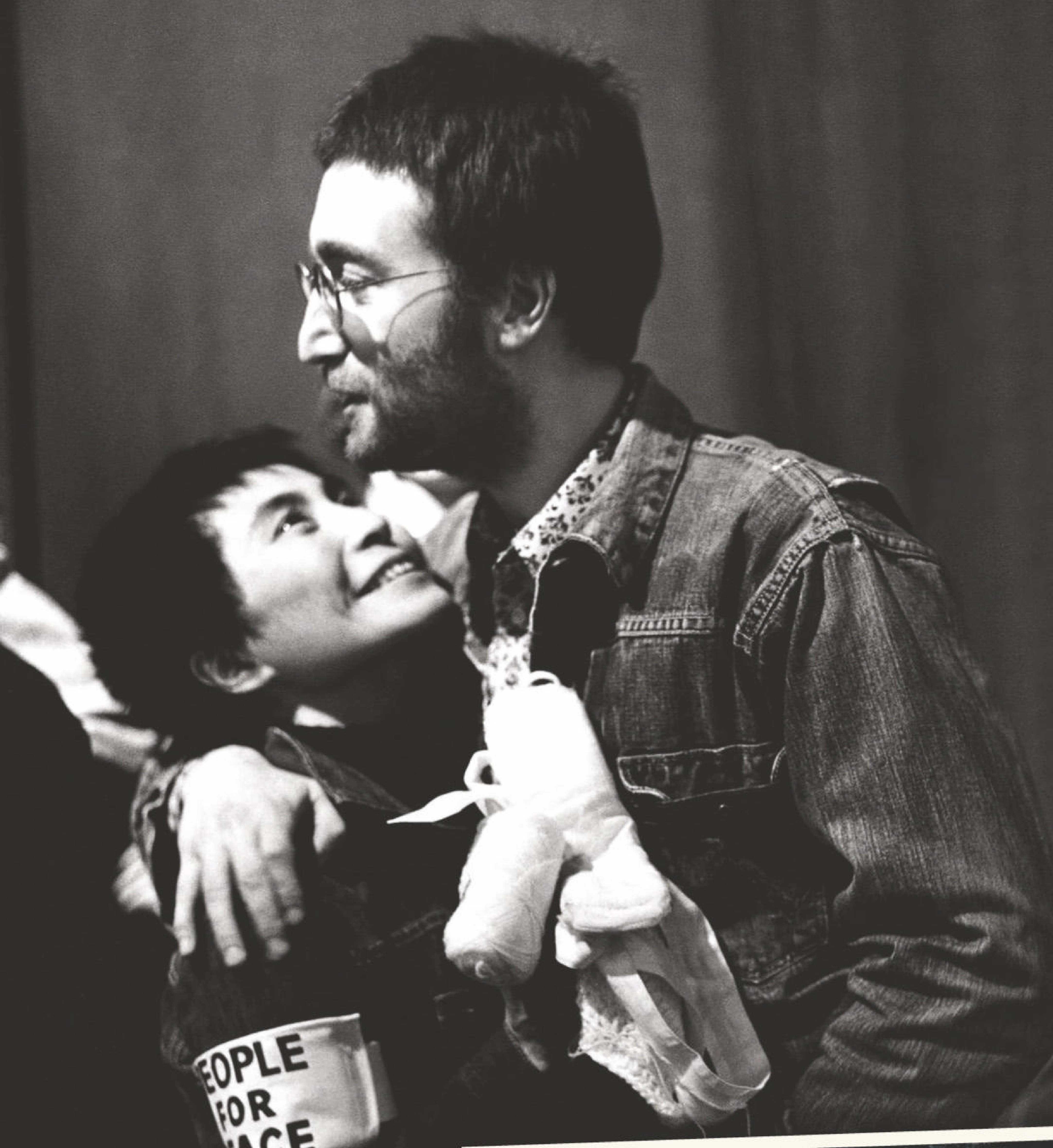
Three years earlier, John had written All You Need Is Love for the world – about the gentle, universal love we should all have for one another. And The Beatles played it to 200 million viewers via a global television broadcast.

I believe he wrote [the *POB* track] Love for himself. At last, he had opened up his innermost places and was experiencing the overwhelming and profound love he had been so desperately looking and longing for, first shared with another person – Yoko – and then, most important of all, a love for himself. He had finally found his own self-worth.

This album was the beginning of John starting to find his way. I remember much later, in the late '70s, being with him at the Dakota and he was teaching me how to cook rice. If you are a person in the limelight, you don't have much time to think about how to cook rice, you just eat it. And there he was, teaching me how to cook rice. He was really happy. He said, "Klaus, now I don't have any more contractual obligations. I don't have to do a record. I don't want to do a record. I just want to be here and be with my son and be with Yoko and feel good." He could pick up a guitar and play for fun if he wanted, but he didn't have the pressure of continuously composing new songs for deadlines. And every day he was getting better and better. ➢

Extracted from JOHN & YOKO/PLASTIC ONO BAND by John Lennon and Yoko Ono, published by Thames & Hudson in hardback at £40

NISyndication/Tim Bishop, Bill Zygmant/Shutterstock, Courtesy Yoko Ono Lennon



“He had finally found his own self-worth” John and Yoko embrace the future; (right, from left) Alan White, Eric Clapton, Klaus Voormann, John and Yoko relax the morning after their September 13, 1969 Toronto Rock & Roll Revival set; (opposite) Lennon with Stuart Sutcliffe; the *John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band* cover.

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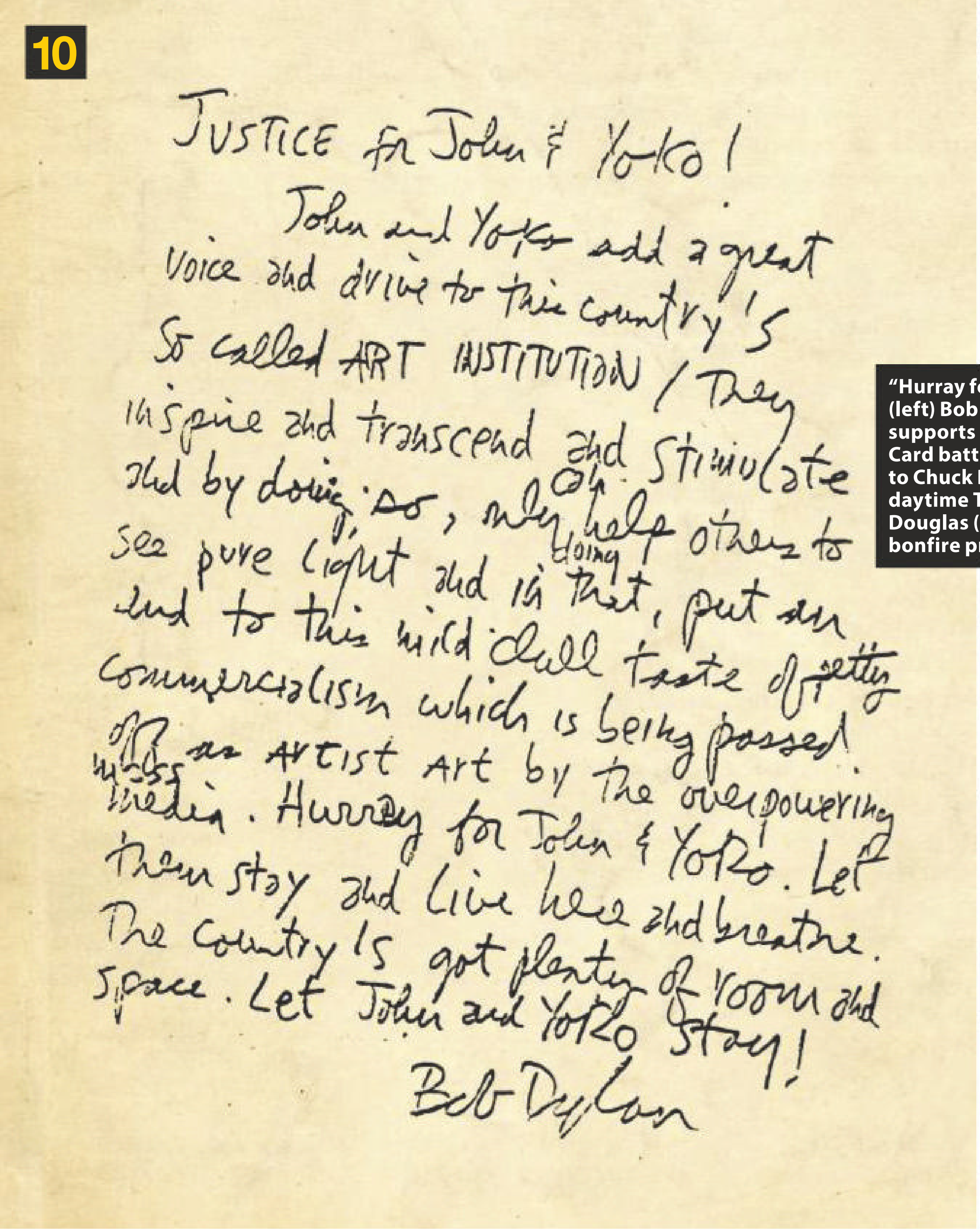

JUSTICE for John & Yoko!
John and Yoko add a great
voice and drive to this country's
so called ART INSTITUTION / They
inspire and transcend and stimulate
and by doing so, only help others to
see pure light and in doing that, put an
end to this mild dull taste of petty
commercialism which is being passed
off as artist art by the overpowering
mass media. Hurray for John & Yoko. Let
them stay and live here and breathe.
The country's got plenty of room and
space. Let John and Yoko stay!
Bob Dylan

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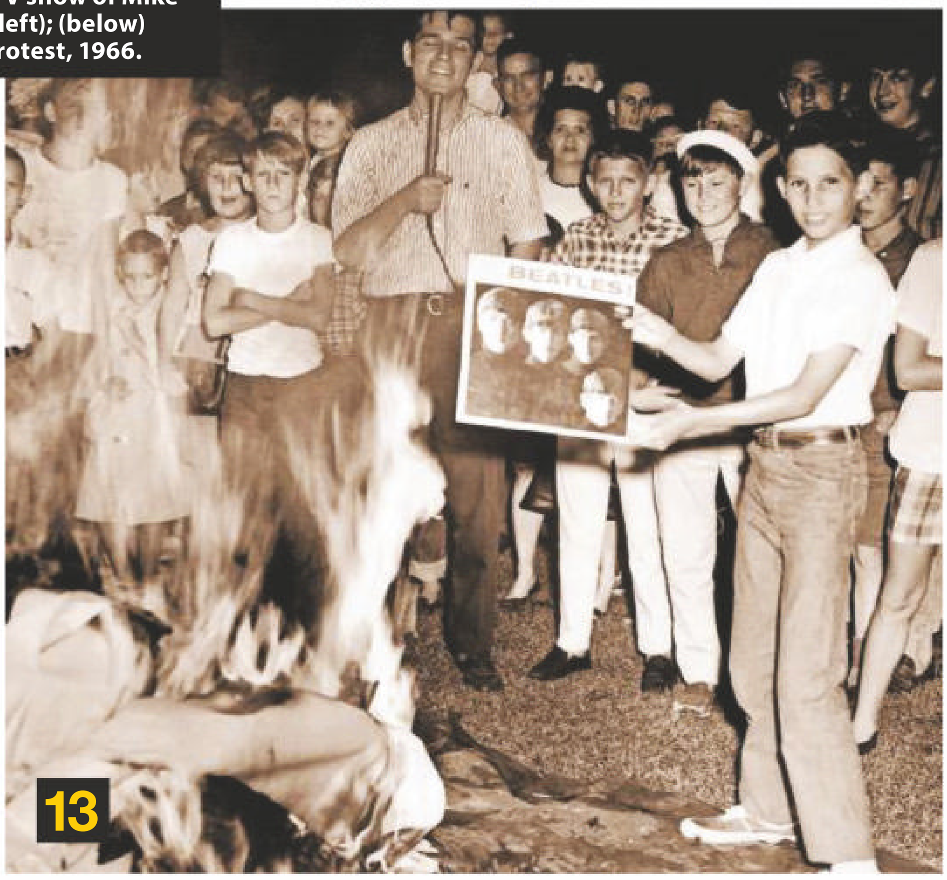

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"Hurray for John and Yoko" (left) Bob Dylan's letter supports Lennon's Green Card battle; (right) talking to Chuck Berry on the daytime TV show of Mike Douglas (left); (below) bonfire protest, 1966.

10 WITH HIS GREEN CARD BATTLE

In 1972, John and Yoko were living in New York and performing at rallies urging demonstrators to vote against President Nixon, and included a doctored photo of Tricky Dick dancing naked in the artwork for their *Some Time In New York City* LP. Nixon's administration retaliated, referencing a 1968 cannabis bust to order Lennon's deportation. The couple fought back, spending years and lawyers' fees in a draining legal battle, prompting letters of support from Bob Dylan (*see above*) and Leonard Bernstein among others. The US government refused to relent, even after a scandal-ridden Nixon resigned in 1974. In October 1975, a panel of judges finally ruled in Lennon's favour – the icing on the cake was son Sean's birth that same month. Lennon had taken on the most powerful institution in the world – and won. *MS*

11 BY CHANGING THE MEANING OF 'RECORDING'

The Beatles

The Recording Studio As Instrument has many fathers (don't forget Les Paul) but the challenges Lennon set The Beatles' Abbey Road recording team in the latter '60s, met ever more ingeniously with bravura tape editing, ADT and the like, make Lennon a prime mover. Each innovation drew recording further from capture-the-performance and closer to the creation of something that wasn't, or could never be, 'played'. Lennon's Strawberry Fields Forever, with its combination of two separate recordings in different tempos and keys, was the daring and hypnotic apogee – the result, an alternate sonic universe with its own geography and physics. For Lennon, eventually, it became All Too Much. A return to rock'n'roll basics was his penance – but not before the recording studio as adventure playground and modern art workshop was declared open. *DE*

Getty (4), Alamy, Shutterstock

12 WITH THE MIKE DOUGLAS SHOW TAKEOVER

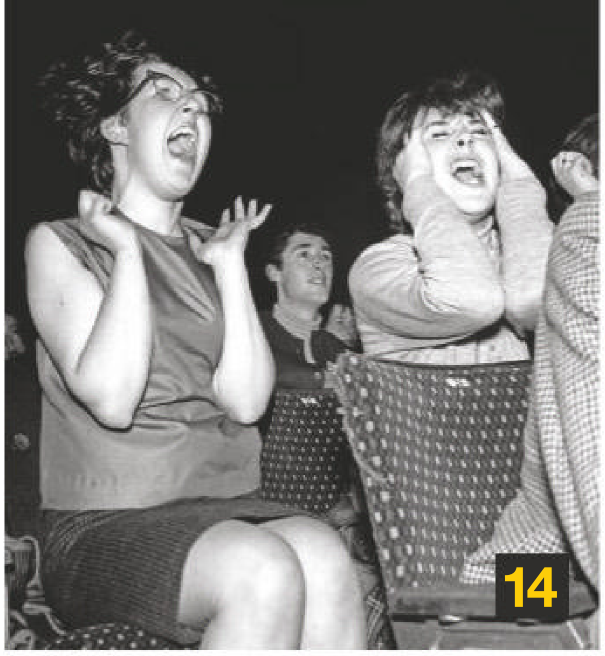
In February 1972, Mike Douglas's daytime TV talk show offered its millions of viewers an extraordinary experiment: a week of shows curated and co-hosted by John Lennon and Yoko Ono. The combination was subversive from the off. Douglas, a former big band singer, was the housewife's favourite; Lennon and Ono were fresh from playing benefit gigs for White Panther John Sinclair and the victims of the Attica prison uprising. On day one, Lennon promised to spotlight "love, peace, women's lib, racism, war, prisons." Among the viewers was an FBI agent who classified Lennon as SM-NL: Security Matter-New Left. Alongside Chuck Berry and The Chambers Brothers, the couple booked consumer activist Ralph Nader, comedian George Carlin, a macrobiotic chef and two defendants from the trial of the Chicago Eight: Yippie Jerry Rubin and Black Panther Bobby Seale were still two of the most hated men in the land. "The whole week was strange," Douglas said years later. "It was truly a happening." *DL*

13 WITH 'BIGGER THAN JESUS'

Like much of what The Beatles did, or happened to them, the scale and newness of it can be underestimated at a distance. Lennon's observation to Maureen Cleave in the London Evening Standard in March 1966 that "We're more popular than Jesus now" was barely an overstatement – certainly when applied to Britain – and also a serious rumination on the decline of Western spirituality. Neither did it judge The Beatles, or rock'n'roll (also doomed, said Lennon) in any way superior. Given the Stateside death threats and record-burning that followed, you'd have forgiven Lennon for repudiating his position (these days, his PR would claim his words had been 'taken out of context'). But instead, in Chicago that August, he merely clarified his position ("I was not saying we are greater or better"). Future form indicated that, somehow, he hadn't been deterred from speaking his mind. The idea that a representative of youth culture might dare to say something valid to society was born. *DE*

14 WITH THAT ROLLING STONE INTERVIEW

Post-primal scream therapy, Lennon vented his seething, bottled-up rage across two issues – January 21 and February 4 – of the counter-culture bullhorn. In a venomous diatribe reeled off for founder/publisher Jann Wenner, he maintained he was a "genius" and the "artist" in the band and characterised McCartney as a saccharine hack who'd become a control freak. He criticised Dylan, Jagger, George Martin and Beatles' fans ("fucking idiots"), but called Yoko his "creative equal" and embraced the left-wing politics he'd equivocated over in Revolution. The interview's astonishing honesty was a first for a star of his stature, and, along with Manson and Altamont, it revealed more complicated layers to the '60s love message he'd once sung about. Of a piece with *John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band*, Lennon's candour foretold punk's cathartic anger. *MS*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People power: (clockwise left) Beatles fans – "idiots"?; message to Our World TV special, Abbey Road, 1967; with the Maharishi Yogi, Bangor, Wales, August 1967; with gongs, October 26, 1965.

> "On daytime TV, Lennon promised to spotlight 'love, peace, women's lib, racism, war, prisons."

15 BY **SWITCHING OFF HIS MIND**

A champion of idling's harmlessness ("…and after all I'm *only* sleeping"), Lennon knew the worth of wool-gathering. To dream the likes of Tomorrow Never Knows, Strawberry Fields Forever and Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds, first you have to dream, while "Switch off your mind…"; "Let me take you down…"; "Picture yourself…" invite the listener to dream, too. Even protest, John and Yoko's bed-in suggested, might work best horizontally, while Watching The Wheels, all doodling piano and back-off-I'm-happy-baking-bread sentiments, reads like I'm Only Sleeping Part 2 ("People say I'm lazy…"). Lennon understood that to see the world anew you sometimes have to escape it. *JMc*

16 BY **HANDING BACK HIS MBE**

Lennon's motivation for accepting an MBE in 1965 was surely fuelled by delight at the outrage he knew it would cause – several previous recipients returned their medals in protest. Four years later, John sent his gong back to the Queen – it possibly took him that long to find it – citing events in Biafra, Britain's support of the US in Vietnam "and Cold Turkey slipping down the charts". He signed it "John Lennon of Bag". You can almost hear him scoffing at Sir Paul and Sir Ringo's knighthoods. *CI*

17 WITH **COLD TURKEY/ DON'T WORRY KYOKO**

Plastic Ono Band
COLD TURKEY
Don't worry Kyoko

The second Plastic Ono Band single underlined Lennon's new MO – to deliver unfiltered newsflashes from his life (and psyche) and waste no time getting them on the shelves. In October 1969 that meant a remarkably transparent advertisement that the Lennons had recently kicked heroin, with searing guitar slashes, an awesome Klaus Voormann bass line and spooked references to Lennon's "goose-pimple bone", plus a B-side that backed Yoko's blood-curdling wail with a Clapton-Lennon zombie-blues lock-groove, two fingers to his new wife's axis of detractors among racists, misogynists and dismayed Beatle loyalists. This, just a month after the release of *Abbey Road*. *DE*

18 BY **REJECTING MYTHOLOGY …INCLUDING HIS OWN**

If Ringo was the biggest Beatles fan in The Beatles, then John was the chief sceptic, undermining the mythology from within. Once he'd caught the iconoclasm bug by mocking Mao (Revolution) and the Maharishi (Sexy Sadie), he couldn't allow himself to spare his own band. Glass Onion was the first sign that he had had enough: a psychedelic in-joke which spoofed the desire of fans and critics to over-interpret lyrics with a blizzard of allusions and red herrings. Soon there was so much that Lennon wanted to reject that only list songs could contain them all. In God from *John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band* he repudiated every leader and ideology he could think of, saving his most outrageous heresy 'til last: "I don't believe in Beatles." It was the sound of the final coffin nail being banged in. The Beatles had to die so that John could live. *DL*

19 WITH **ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE**

When The Beatles were asked at short notice to provide a new song for the first-ever global satellite TV broadcast, Our World, scheduled for June 25, 1967, it was Lennon's All You Need Is Love that prevailed. The brief had demanded a lyric in "basic English" for an international audience, and Lennon, long fascinated with Pop Art, advertising and slogans, replied with a bramah: "All you need is love" not only nailed the hippy *Zeitgeist*, but also, according to Fabs manager Brian Epstein, had the advantage, in the Bigger Than Jesus aftermath, that "it cannot be misinterpreted". Yet writing a song so super-simplistic invited jeopardy: mostly, that it could have been absolute rot (cf. The Rolling Stones' retort, We Love You). The reason it wasn't lay in the sheer conviction Lennon brought to his vocal, plus an array of clever booby-traps – shifting time signatures, 'missing' beats – and some very neatly camouflaged cynicism. Are "learning how to play the game" and "finding yourself in time" really ideas relating to love as a panacea? Powerful 'slogans as songs' were to follow: Give Peace A Chance, Power To The People, Imagine, Happy Xmas (War Is Over), but this was the prototype. *PG*

➢

Fantasy time: John and Yoko recording in New York, 1980; (bottom) Earl Slick in 1981.

20 BY ENDING ON A HIGH

By *Double Fantasy* guitarist **Earl Slick**.

SOMEWHERE AROUND THE SPRING OF 1980, MY manager had a phone call from Jack Douglas who said he had a record for me to do. I had just signed a record contract with Columbia Records. He said, "I can't tell you who it is." I said to my manager, "Next time Jack calls up, just throw John Lennon's name into the conversation, and see how he reacts." And that's how I knew it was John.

John had put together a great band [for *Double Fantasy*], the best session guys on the planet. My guitar partner on the album was Hugh McCracken, and then there was Tony Levin playing bass, and Andy Newmark – who had played with Bowie – was on drums. I was referred to by Jack as the wild card – someone who is more a street rock'n'roll player than a session guy, and John had remembered me from when we did the *Young Americans* songs for Bowie: Fame and Across The Universe. Which was funny because I was so fucked up I don't remember recording those. I don't remember meeting John! But we got on great, and Yoko as well. John also paid well. Very well.

One of the first songs that we recorded was (Just Like) Starting Over, so you're right back in the '50s, and it had that flavour of rock'n'roll. And even between songs when he'd jam on stuff, he was always doing Buddy Holly, Gene Vincent, Chuck Berry. The attitude was pre-Beatles but you've also got songs on there like I'm Losing You, which was more the dark side of John. And I love Nobody Told Me – that's a great song.

But there were lots more. The songs that we hadn't finished, we planned to go back in the studio in January of '81, have those in the can, and then go on tour. He was of the mind, now he had decided to get back in the game again, that if you were writing, that you should record, and you should release. I also played the rhythm bits on Yoko's Walking On Thin Ice – the solo is John.

Shutterstock, Ebet Roberts

> "The conversation ended with plans for 1981: 'Are you all ready to go for January?' To which I replied, 'Absolutely.'"
> **Earl Slick**

I spoke to him the night before his murder. I called the studio to speak to John Smith, who was the assistant, and somehow I ended up getting John on the phone. The conversation we had was, "How are they liking the record on the West Coast? Are they playing it on the radio?" And the conversation ended with plans for 1981: "Are you all ready to go for January?" To which I replied, "Absolutely."

I was on the West Coast, and I was gearing up to come to New York for the holidays. I was at home with my wife and we were putting together gifts for my family in New York and I got a call saying, "Have you seen the news? Something's happened to Lennon. He's hurt." There was a barrage of news on television and it didn't seem real. It was like watching 9/11.

The way I viewed John was… I saw The Beatles on TV and I knew John's solo albums but then meeting him was something else. To see someone like that who had such a major impact not only in the music business but in society, standing up against the Vietnam War, and protesting on the streets and people listened to him – to see that amount of power coming from what should have been some sort of Joe Blow human amazes me. He was unique. He was a fucking anomaly.

In 2010, when they were mixing *Double Fantasy Stripped Down*, Jack Douglas invited me to the studio at Yoko's request to listen to some of it. I was sitting at the control desk and on some tracks, when they took the echo and stuff off his voice, I caught myself glancing at the iso-booth. I swear, it sounded like he was in the room.

As told to David Buckley

Dreamers: Martin Aston, Geoff Brown, Stevie Chick, Danny Eccleston, Pat Gilbert, John Harris, Colin Irwin, Dorian Lynskey, James McNair, Andrew Perry, Michael Simmons.

MOJO FILTER

YOUR GUIDE TO THE MONTH'S BEST MUSIC

EDITED BY **JENNY BULLEY** jenny.bulley@bauermedia.co.uk

Moo
N MAYALL
t generation
1965-1974
KIWI JR.
Bill Evans
Live At Ronnie Scott's
with Eddie Gomez
Jack DeJohnette
Sleaford Mods
PARE RIBS
THE ISL
Jamaica
Ska
ESENTING THE SKA-TALITES

> “A wordless chorale wafts like smoke-stack vapours; it could accompany a coach gliding past a smelting plant.”
>
> **KIERON TYLER MARVELS AT SNOW PALMS, ALBUMS P87**

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Boom and bust

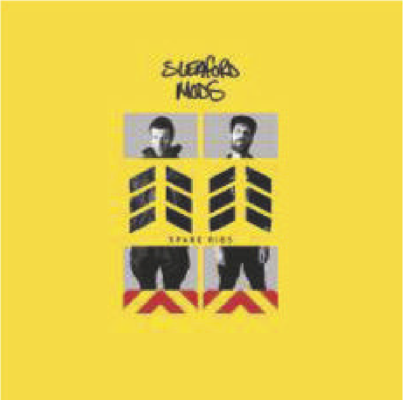
Lincs duo go for heart as well as spleen as they open up over lockdown and look back to the '80s. By **Victoria Segal**. Illustration by **Sam Hadley**.

Sleaford Mods

★★★★

Spare Ribs

ROUGH TRADE. **CD/DL/LP**



AS A TEENAGER, Jason Williamson just wanted to be famous. He didn't know exactly how he could make it happen, he tells MOJO, he just knew he didn't "want this shit". Sitting in his bedroom in Grantham in the mid-'80s, he'd avidly scan the style magazines thinking, "'Wow, just look at all these interesting people in London'… I fell for it big time." After Sleaford Mods released their formal debut *Austerity Dogs* in 2013, there's no doubt frontman Williamson and his spectral co-conspirator Andrew Fearn did become faces – just not quite in the way a 16-year-old eagerly reading about Tim Roth and Mantronix might have imagined back in 1986. Instead, the duo have taken on the role of tattered, bill-stickered poster-boys for modern British decline, their music coming with a uric tang of rage, violence and neglect, railing against a system that blocks the escape routes with intractable, implacable disdain. "Get Brexit punched/Let's get Brexit fucked by a horse's penis," spits Williamson at one point on *Spare Ribs*, their sixth album, and once again, Nick Kamen seems a very long way away.

> "The music, always a loaves and fishes stretch, bulks out whole worlds with very little."

Given their previous hair-trigger form, you might have put money on Sleaford Mods being the band most likely to be sent into full-on, knife-in-teeth Walking Dead meltdown by 2020. Yet while the band's fury at corruption, incompetence and duplicity remains fierce ("Why's this cunt got police protection/He wasn't even running in the last election/I bet his partner at night says things like 'It's all for the good of your ideas'"), *Spare Ribs* is a strikingly layered response to harder times. Since 2017's *English Tapas* at least, they have been alert to the need to recalibrate and readjust – on 2019's *Eton Alive*, Williamson's singing voice caused quite a stir – and like the actor Williamson always wanted to be (he had a cameo in Ben Wheatley's recent adaptation of Rebecca), their range has subtly widened. For a start, *Spare Ribs* marks the first time Williamson and Fearn have opened up their two-man creative bubble, inviting Amy Taylor of Melbourne's Amyl And The Sniffers and the Bristol-based Billy Nomates (AKA Tor Maries) to guest on the album, their appearances adding more light and shade to Sleaford Mods' typically harsh fluorescent glare. "It's such a shame that every person that I meet needs smacking in the head," from the full-pelt, sledgehammer-titled Shortcummings, is still one of the album's key sing-along, print-it-on-a-T-shirt lines – but that's not all that's left echoing after the record ends.

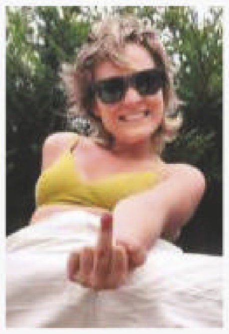
Spare Ribs was recorded in the summer, just after the first restrictions started to lift: "The first few days were a bit weird," admits Williamson, "Andrew hadn't seen anybody, really, and neither had we, but then we got into it. It took about another three weeks and we'd done it." The title refers to people who are treated as dispensable, surplus, necessary wastage: "We're all so Tory-tired/And beaten by minds small," husks Williamson on brief, lyrical opener A New Brick, a surreal barker's call that sets out the album's stall.

Meanwhile, the title track offers stark images from a failing society, homeless spice-users congregating "under a concrete Jesus Christ". Nothing gives. The music, though, sounds tremendous. Always a loaves-and-fishes stretch, it miraculously manages to bulk out whole worlds from very little: low sclerotic frequencies on the gleeful trolling of I Don't Rate You; Elocution's scrapyard Human League; LCD Soundsystem broken down for parts on Spare Ribs. Out There, an explicit pandemic track that evilly starts with a cough, comes with an elastic, jazz-inflected slither, bending and weaving like someone trying to keep their distance through the newly paranoid streets. It's an eerie sci-fi trip into something that looks normal but is deeply wrong, Williamson swerving the conspiracy theorists on the way past the shops and the clinic, before thoughts of an unelected official "putting milk in the bowls of his children's inevitable tears every morning" crashes in.

If outside is bad, it's not so great inside, either. "I think I want something to come out of my phone that ain't there," says Williamson astutely on the bleepy claustrophobia of Top Room, the sound of agitated pacing between too-small walls, a mood echoed on the panicked no-escape self-reckoning of All Day Ticket. Yet a shrunken world also forces introspection. Mork N Mindy predates the pandemic, a beautifully bleak and eerie recreation of Sunday-night childhood in a "really depressing cul-de-sac" of divorces. Billy Nomates' raw-edged contribution – "You're not from round here/Crash-landed about a week ago" – underlines the alienation. You can't be a funny rainbow-braced Martian when you're lost on your own planet.

Even more poignant is Fishcakes, an examination of Williamson's childhood directly triggered by endless lockdown thoughts, its references to chip shop trips and second-hand presents ("scouring the papers at Christmastime") made more poignant by the frailty of Williamson's vocals and the one-bar gothic glow. "And when it mattered and it always did/At least we live," he sings. It's the opposite of Spare Ribs – all heart.

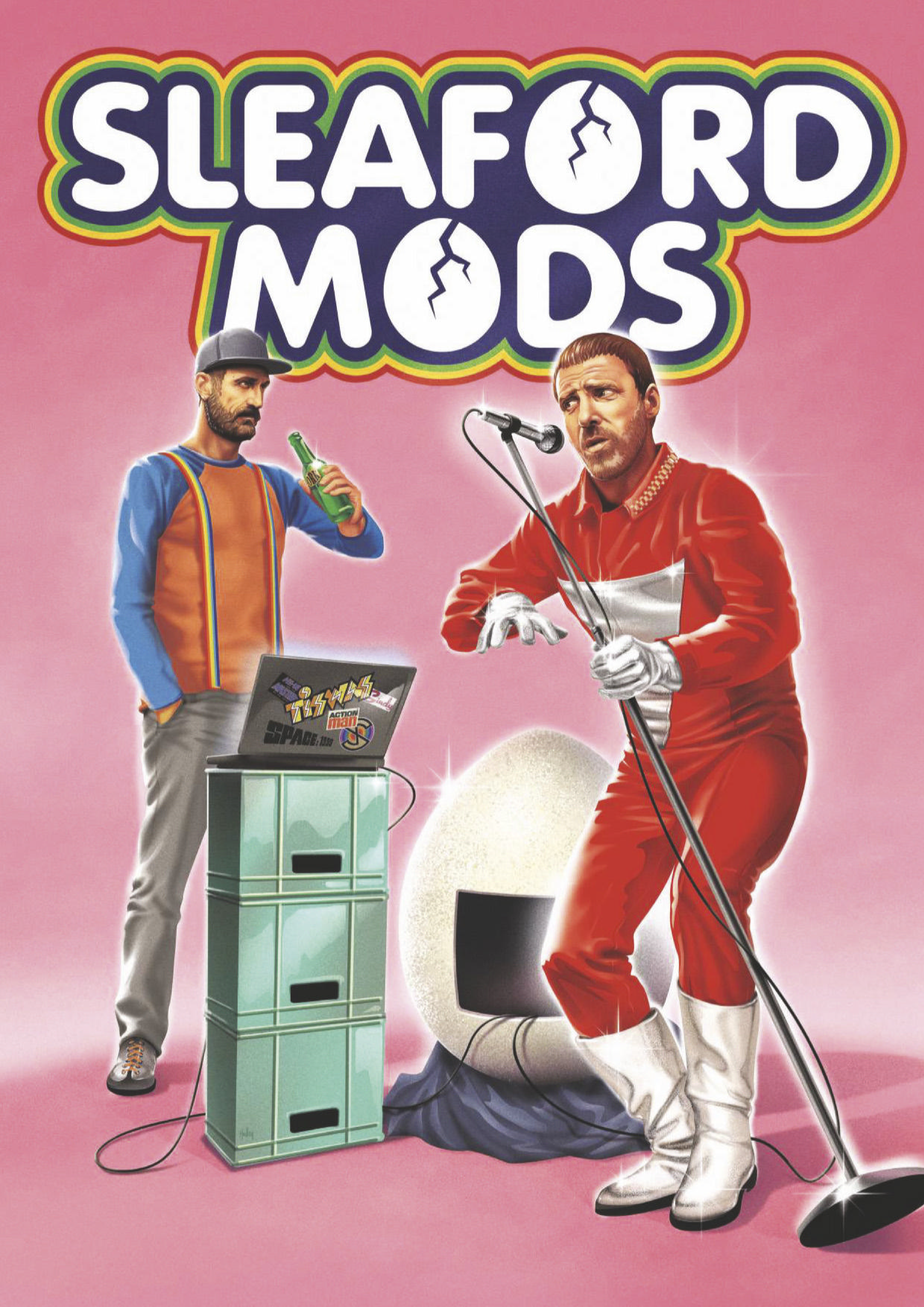
There's plenty of pettier, funnier stuff, too. Nudge It, featuring a blast of Amy Taylor's astringent vocals, attacks clueless class tourists – "Stood outside a high rise/Trying to act like a gangster" – while Elocution's introduction is delivered in mean-spirited, prissy received pronunciation, Williamson playing a musician speaking out for independent venues in the secret hope that one day they will "be in a position to move away from playing independent venues." After the past 12 months, you might feel you want and need more escapism than *Spare Ribs* really offers. Yet if everyone's been made to gaze into the abyss this year, it's a relief, a comfort – maybe even a pleasure – to find Sleaford Mods in there, gazing right back into you.



BACK STORY: MATES RATES

- Billy Nomates, AKA Tor Maries, hit upon her stage name when she went to a Sleaford Mods gig all alone, giving her appearance on *Spare Ribs* a circle-of-life logic. It's the band's first run at collaboration: "I thought it could work – it would steer the sound somewhere else and just break an album up," says Jason Williamson. "Andrew [Fearn] was a bit more hesitant, but when we came across Billy Nomates, I kind of suggested her to Andrew. He was a big fan anyway. She'd gone to Andrew initially and sent him loads of videos and that's how we got to know her." Williamson is also a fan of Amyl And The Sniffers' Amy Taylor: "She's quite funny but at the same time it's totally spit and sawdust."

JASON SPEAKS! WILLIAMSON ON LOCKDOWN LYRICS, FISH'N'CHIPS AND A BAD BACK…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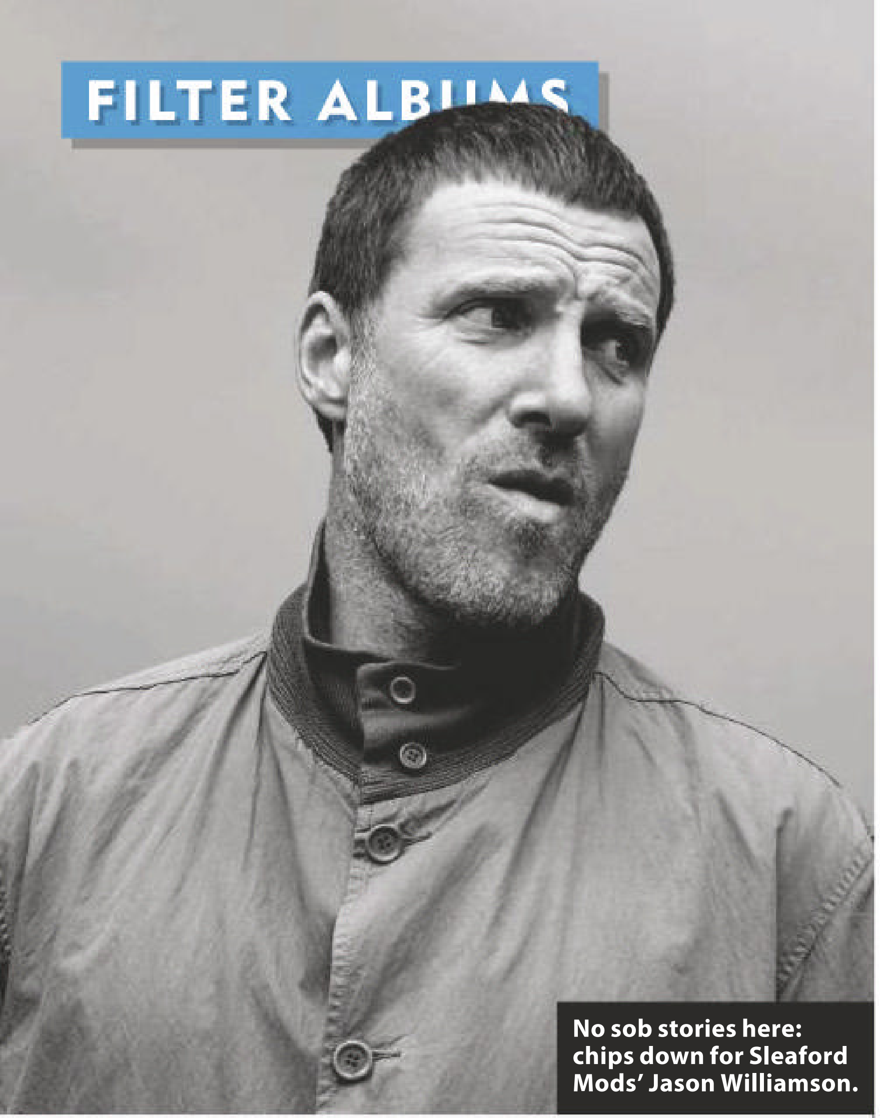


No sob stories here: chips down for Sleaford Mods' Jason Williamson.

"I didn't want it to sound like Paul Young…"

Jason Williamson speaks to **Victoria Segal**.

Did you find lockdown a creative time?

"Yes… but I was a bit concerned that I didn't want to do some kind of obvious lockdown bullshit. (*Shouts*) 'Oh Pandemic! We're all going to die. Virus!' and all this bullshit. There's two songs on there that talk about it a bit but I really struggled with it – have I done the right thing by doing that? But then there was a selfish side of me that wanted to have an album in the collection that marked the time – 'Oh yeah, we released that then'."

What inspired you to write about your childhood on Fishcakes and Mork N Mindy?

"I injured my back over the lockdown. Gyms closed, so I was in the garden, going like the clappers, trying to make up for exercise I would have done at the gym, and obviously I haven't got any of the apparatus. I had an operation on my back when I was a kid – I was born with a kind of mild form of spina bifida where the nerves in my back were all tangled up and a little bit dodgy. When I was about 10 or 11, it got to the point where I couldn't walk so I went to the hospital and this crack team of surgeons sorted it out… But every now and then I get an injury because it's quite a sensitive area. Especially this time round, I was full of codeine and every painkiller going and I started thinking about childhood. I spoke to one of the surgeons at Queen's Med [Medical Centre] in Nottingham, and he knew the guy who did the operation so it was quite emotional, and I started thinking about my childhood and where I lived and I started exploring that a bit more."

Did writing about that give you any worries?

"I didn't want it to sound like that Paul Young song – Love Of The Common People. Actually, that was a cover wasn't it? I didn't want to do a cheesy (*sings*), 'Oh, we were poor but we were happy.' But I started thinking about the times when I was a kid, having second-hand Christmas presents or going to the chip shop for my birthday because my mum couldn't afford to do anything really special. The chip shop was great anyway. I sometimes worry that perhaps I've overplayed it and it's a bit of a sob story, and I didn't want it to come across like that. I wanted to try and get that idea of being eight years old in Grantham in 1978."

How about Mork N Mindy?

"Mork N Mindy was based more on when I was about 14, 15, and my mum remarried. My stepfather was fucking brilliant; proper professional builder. He'd got this business up and running in Grantham and got a lot of work, so he'd built himself this new house and we moved in. It was a really big house but he'd built it in the middle of an estate that we lived on anyway. So you'd look out of your lovely double-glazed window with your Tudor lead design on it and there'd be the next-door neighbours at the back door arguing. It was just the boredom of it, and the isolation."

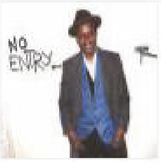
Errol Linton

★★★★

No Entry

BRASSDOG. CD/DL/LP

The Brixton blues stalwart at his best; analogue-recorded.



The son of Jamaican immigrants, Errol Linton was championed by John Peel in the late 1980s after a busking jaunt on the London Underground. As with earlier sets, the blues of *No Entry* is infused with reggae undercurrents, the beautiful instrumental Speak Easy referencing Ernest Ranglin's Surfin' and The Abyssinians' Satta Massa Ganna. There's also a rumbling dub bass line on Howlin' For My Darlin' and lilting guitar skank on Love You True, while the drumming and percussion of Jazz Jamaica's Kenrick Rowe and Tony Uter keeping things sweet as Natacha Atlas' former bassist Adam Blake provides understated guitar. Aside from a likeable version of Sonny Boy Williamson's Got To Move, everything else is original, the band conjuring a very London take on the blues with Linton's rich tenor voice and expressive harmonica at its core.

David Katz

James Yorkston And The Second Hand Orchestra

★★★★

The Wide, Wide River

DOMINO. CD/DL/LP

Recorded in three days, more lively collaborations by the Scottish singer-songwriter.

Nearly 20 years after Domino Records signed him, James Yorkston is still exploring new avenues with his curious, skilful compositions. Last year's Yorkston/Thorne/Khan release *Navarasa: Nine Emotions*, was a career highlight, full of cross-cultural, improvisational zeal. The same spirit fuels this new project, recorded in only three days with the Swedish instrumental collective (including Peter Morén from Peter, Bjorn And John). The only track the group heard before the session was Ella Mary Leather: in their hands it becomes a quicksilver, impish tribute to the British folklore collector ("Do you believe your elders?" Yorkston asks, as the band race behind him). Other highlights include Struggle, a tender song for his children which discusses the realities of adulthood, and the lulling murmurations of A Droplet Forms and We Test The Beams. Yorkston is one of our finest talents, still stretching out.

Jude Rogers

M. Ward

★★★★

Think Of Spring

ANTI-. CD/DL/LP

On his 11th solo release – a benefit LP – Ward sings Billie.

M. WARD
THINK OF SPRING

Just months after M. Ward's rich, dreamy *Migration Stories* comes this solo, voice-and-guitar album of Billie Holiday covers, recorded on a 4-track at his Portland home. Spellbinding, self-contained and strangely beautiful, with the hazy, late-night feel of an empty nightclub, it features all 10 songs from *Lady In Satin* (1958), the last record Holiday released before her death. Ward, in his early twenties when he first heard it, mistook her voice for a distortion box on an electric guitar. Trying to recreate its atmosphere became a lifelong obsession. On his 2009 album *Hold Time* he covered I'm A Fool To Want You, but as an instrumental. Here he sings, using multiple guitar tunings for the complex arrangements, and his voice is variously a warm croon (For Heaven's Sake), sometimes darker (Violets For Your Furs) but mostly pure and tender – heartbreaking on his revisit to I'm A Fool To Want You. Proceeds go to the Black Lives Fund and Inner-City Arts.

Sylvie Simmons

Martin Simpson

★★★★

Home Recordings

TOPIC. CD/DL

Brit folk maestro takes it easy.

Simpson has travelled far and wide, metaphorically and literally, on his colourful musical journey, but now responds to the chains of the pandemic in characteristically resourceful style. It sounds as if he's just said 'sod it' and sat down at home with a bunch of guitars and banjos… and played his heart out. Which, for an artisan as skilful and tenderly sensitive as he, is entirely wonderful. Banjo ascendant, there's unfettered joy in the way he sings Mike Waterson's Three Day Millionaire and something almost spiritual about his playing on the beautiful air Plains Of Waterloo. His downsized revisit to one of his best songs, An Englishman Abroad, offers total contrast to the stomping New Orleans arrangement on *True Stories* and he effectively integrates favoured Lyle Lovett, John Prine and Bob Dylan songs into the mood of front porch reverie. Intimacy as art form.

Martin Simpson
Home Recordings

Colin Irwin

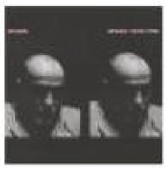
Shame

★★★★

Drunk Tank Pink

DEAD OCEANS. CD/DL/LP

South London rockers return, all angst and sharp angles.



As expected of a group taken under the decrepit wing of the Fat White Family, Shame's 2018 debut, *Songs Of Praise*, was a scuzzy, spittle-flecked riot, set in the capital's grubby underbelly. For the follow up, the south Londoners have turned their gaze inwards. *Drunk Tank Pink* is an album riddled with anxiety. Its songs struggle to find sanity amid breakdowns, break-ups and chemical psychosis. That sense of unease is mirrored in the music. Born In Luton sounds like *Fear Of Music*-era Talking Heads in the middle of a panic attack, the disjointed skronk of Nigel Hitter is all sharp corners and cranky guitars, while Snow Day delivers a nerve-shredding cacophony of post-punk noise. The bolshie anthems of its predecessor might be thin on the ground here, but admirably, *Drunk Tank Pink* is the sound of a band pushing themselves to discover new sonic and emotional terrain.

Chris Catchpole

Anxious moments: Shame look inwards.

You've been Ad

Lapsed prog rocker goes shopping, hits the dancefloor. By **Mark Blake**.

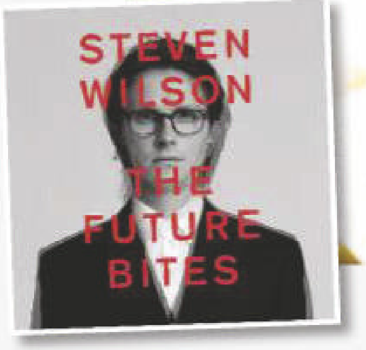
Consumer rights: Steven Wilson hits the stores.

Steven Wilson

★★★★

The Future Bites

TFB.COM/CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL. CD/DL/LP/MC/BR



WHAT A LONG strange trip it's been for Steven Wilson. The Robert Fripp of '90s prog stylists Porcupine Tree, his solo work since 2008 has seen him embracing pop, dance and electronica, and becoming all the more interesting for it. He's the self-confessed music geek from Hemel Hempstead, who sells out the Royal Albert Hall and puts on his headphones whenever XTC or Yes, among others, need their old works repurposed for a deluxe-edition box set.

Wilson's sixth solo album explores social media overload and rampant consumerism. "Buy the shit we never knew we lacked," as he suggests on Personal Shopper – and this includes those deluxe-edition box sets. It's all very meta but presented as social commentary rather than finger-wagging critique. Wilson knows he's as guilty as the rest of us.

The message is also sold with some of his best songs yet. Wilson's innate understanding, as a producer, of what makes, say, *Skylarking* or *Fragile* tick, feeds into his own writing. The downside is he's such a musical savant, his influences can appear too obvious, as on parts of his last solo release, 2017's *To The Bone*, and certainly further back.

The Future Bites wears its inspirations lightly, though. Its nine songs are stripped of extraneous fat, with odd bursts of Prince and Trevor Horn-produced Yes and ZTT hits alongside this century's Tame Impala and Wilson's co-producer David Kosten's ambient music project Faultline. The tunes shimmer and the contrast on the melodies is turned up high, while the imaginative twists and turns of Self, King Ghost and Eminent Sleaze – the last is heavy-footed funk driven by soaring female vocals – are uniquely Wilson's.

He's an understated singer, but this subtlety suits both 12 Things I Forgot's cheerful pop and Man Of The People, where his melancholy voice floats – disembodied and Auto-Tuned – through a galaxy of electronic bleeps and washes, like 10cc's I'm Not In Love reimagined by bots. Wilson inhabits these songs completely, because he's so believable as its subject: a tech-head surrounded by stuff and obsessively filling his Amazon basket with more. *The Future Bites* drives its point home on Personal Shopper, where Wilson pauses the thumping Moroder-ish backing track to let special guest and renowned shop-aholic Elton John recite a wish list of items: "Teeth whitener, volcanic ash soap, smart watch…"

The futurebites.com website stays in character, detailing limited-edition merchandise, like a £200 branded dot generator (a hole punch by any other name) and, inevitably, a £75 box set. Pop eating itself, and coming back for seconds. Wilson runs the risk of being a smart-arse, but the music saves him. *The Future Bites* is a great grown-up pop record – knowing and self-aware, but never too much for its own good.

Adrian Corker

★★★★

Tin Star: Liverpool

SN VARIATIONS. DL/LP

Contemporary classical, field recordings, experimental noise all meet in third score.

Coming up for its third series, Rowan Joffe's icy modern noir inhabits a strange middle ground between the conventional and absurd. Similarly, the scores for the series by London-based composer Corker combine elements of conventional Hollywood scoring with more atonal amorphous elements. Corker has come a long way from his first crime drama soundtrack (1997's Face) and the minimal folk horror of 2011's *The Way of The Morris*. For his final score in the Tin Star trilogy (now set in Liverpool) he utilises a 12-piece string section alongside brass, percussion and inner-city field recordings by sound recordist Chris Watson to create an urban tone poem of drip-drip tension and creeping dread that moves from the slow-motion impressionism of Toru Takemitsu to the wintry string drones of Richard Skelton, simultaneously serving the demands of a mainstream TV drama while dismantling the tradition.

Andrew Male

Belle & Sebastian

★★★

What To Look For In Summer

MATADOR. CD/LP

Double live album culled from assorted 2019 shows.

For Belle & Sebastian, 2020 was scheduled to be a year of concerts and a new album recorded in Los Angeles. There was meant to be a fans-only live album too. Now, what was once an afterthought has taken centre-stage. It's a snapshot in time, but being Belle & Sebastian it also means a gleeful perversity. So there's no I'm A Cuckoo or The Blues Are Still Blue, but what emerges is a formerly reticent live band finding real joy on-stage, whether it's taking pot-shots at Boris Johnson on Step Into My Office Baby, Sarah Martin standing in for Norah Jones on Little Lou, Ugly Jack, Prophet John, or the impossibly genial Stuart Murdoch exuding wry warmth: "let us explore the early sexual politics of some of the members of Belle & Sebastian". It's exactly what you'd expect, but in a good way.

John Aizlewood

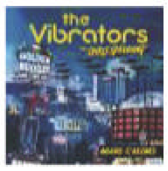
The Vibrators With Chris Spedding

★★★

Mars Casino

CLEOPATRA. CD/DL/LP

The original line-up reunited for feisty comeback.



Formed in 1976, their frankly weird career trajectory – signed by Mickie Most's decidedly pop RAK label, support slots for The Stranglers, Sex Pistols and Iggy Pop, then numerous break-ups and reformations – made The Vibrators punk's ugly ducklings, never quite accepted as part of the scene, yet crucial players nonetheless. The riffs and approach might seem antique, but there's mileage to be had in short songs played with guitar power. It starts shakily, though: three of the lyrically strongest songs open the album – Mars Casino, Jesus Stole My Little Dog and Garbage Can – but the lead vocal is not so much buried as sporadically almost inaudible. The sound recovers: Book Of Love is sing-along fun, Woman 3.2 witty and endearing, Passing Of Days' art-rocking social commentary is genuinely spooky, while Paper Tiger's guitar riff chimes. Forty-five years later, The Vibrators can still put on a spirited show.

David Buckley

Kevin Godley

★★★★

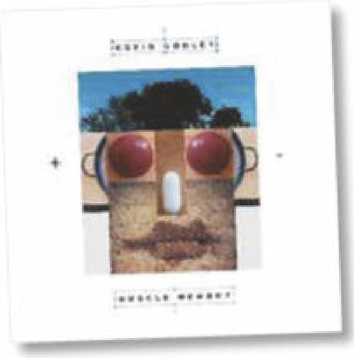
Muscle Memory

STATE51 CONSPIRACY. CD/DL/LP

Now aged 74, and with no sign of a deserting muse, the 10cc man's first solo release.

Kevin Godley (ex-Hot Legs, 10cc and Godley & Creme) has been making genre-skipping art for 50 years as a drummer, songwriter, inventor, video producer, film-maker, writer and visual artist. The 11 tracks here have been created in 'remote collaboration', Godley's lyrics and melodies written over digitally-exchanged basic tracks from musicians both well-known and not. The words are splenetic and direct: topics such as race, gun law, the media, even the future of music and creativity itself, are all tackled with shape-shifting aplomb. The singing hits a clear melismatic vibrancy that echoes Scott Walker and late-period Bowie in some places, then a direct Mancunian drawl in others. The music, meanwhile, at its best on earworm opener Expecting A Message, percussive The Big Bang Theory or the sweeping melodicism of Periscope, is often compelling.

David Buckley



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The Avalanches: their planets are aligning.

Cosmic connections

Third album by the Australian sample-lovers, properly reaching for the stars. By **Jude Rogers**.

The Avalanches

★★★★

We Will Always Love You

EMI. CD/DL/LP

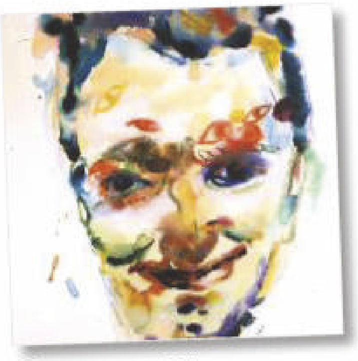
ANY 25-TRACK "exploration of the vibrational relationship between light, sound and spirit" should be approached with breath held. After all, mind-melting new age concept album blow-outs are hard to get right, even if you're a band as dexterous and ambitious at weaving samples into radio-friendly songs as Australian duo, The Avalanches.

Their third album in 20 years has a deeper story behind it, however, and one that straddles the universe, no less. This is the romance between late American cosmologist Carl Sagan and science documentary director Ann Druyan (that's her face on the cover art, in eerie, stretched-out neon blue). Both science communicators, the couple shared a longing to bring the ever-deepening mysteries of the universe to mass audiences through books and TV. They also put together the *Golden Record*, an album of music, sounds and speech from Earth, which was sent into space on Voyager 1 in 1977. Touchingly, it included Druyan talking about what it was like for humans to fall in love.

We Will Always Love You takes the wonder of that moment and skyrockets it through multiple, intriguing moments. Many are shivery and eerie, like the opening track, Ghost Story, featuring Superorganism vocalist Orono Noguchi. She speaks directly to someone she'll always love, apologising for leaving so suddenly and being so far away. Spectres of distance and death hover around her words; it's hard not to feel them deeply in our pandemic-pummelled world.

Then the songs come, lifted by joyful, celestial textures and samples. When The Roches' Hammond Song pops up in the title track (the album's title comes from one of its lyrics), it's an exquisite moment, the women's voices offering glistening hope after Blood Orange ruminates on fear. Odd bedfellows Sergio Mendes and Jimmy Osmond become magical spectres behind Neneh Cherry and Jamie xx on Wherever You Go, a track that also includes excerpts from the *Golden Record*. As UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim and then-US President Jimmy Carter send compassionate messages to other civilisations, you cling to them in these troubling times.

There are many other fascinating, unusual collaborations. Sananda Maitreya and Vashti Bunyan provide delicate, soulful yin and yang on Reflecting Light. MGMT and Johnny Marr turn The Divine Chord into bouncing, other-worldly bubblegum (imagine a well-crafted Flaming Lips curio). Tricky, Mick Jones, Karen O, Kurt Vile, Leon Bridges and Rivers Cuomo are also in the cast, but this never feels thrown-together, which is some achievement. Instead, the album feels like one to spend ample amounts of time with as you travel into its far-flung corners as it reaches for the stars.



Grant Spanier

Casper Clausen

★★★

Better Way

CITY SLANG. CD/DL/LP

Efterklang's yearning voice takes a first solo flight.

The pulse of Used To Think echoes Spacemen 3's Big City. Yet it's his vocal which characterises the longing percolating through *Better Way*'s opening cut. That voice is the crucial element of the frequently seductive first solo outing from Efterklang's front-person Casper Clausen. He and the band are Danish, but he lives in Portugal. Another ex-pat there is Spacemen 3's former co-linchpin, UK-born Sonic Boom – who recorded the album in their adopted country. The internationalism is reflected by the music's diversity. Dominated by Clausen's incantatory singing, Feel It Coming is a mood piece edging towards trip-hop. Snow White is more fragmented – Talk Talk filtered through *Kid A* – but it's that intimate, sinuous vocal which worms in. While the early Efterklang of *Springer* and *Tripper* comes to mind, *Better Way* begs to be fleshed-out in a live setting.

Kieron Tyler

Hilang Child

★★★

Every Mover

BELLA UNION. CD/DL/LP

Second album from half-Welsh, half-Indonesian, Brighton-based Londoner.

In 2018, even the almost universally positive reaction to the first Hilang Child album, *Years*, couldn't prevent Ed Riman from tumbling into a trough of despond. Second time around, *Every Mover* is based on his self-esteem and anxiety issues. But it doesn't sound like it. Instead, as befits one who began his musical life as a drummer, it's a vast, almost swaggering, swathe of sound, where the keyboards on the opening Good To Be Young are almost Nice-ish in their floor-quaking intensity; Play 'Til Evening bustles with Polyphonic Spree-style uplift while the spartan Earthborne is balm for unsettled times. It doesn't all work. The rapid turnover of disparate ideas leaves little time for cohesion and Pesawat Aeroplane and Steppe lumber rather than glide. There's enough here to suggest that Riman has a great LP in him; he's on the right road.

John Aizlewood

Sarah Davachi

★★★

Figures In Open Air

LATE MUSIC. CD/DL

Sprawling live companion to Davachi's *Cantus, Descant*, released in late summer.

Issued in lieu of this year's stymied tour dates, *Figures In Open Air* captures Canadian composer Davachi, solo or in tandem with small chamber ensembles, essaying variations of pieces that would go on to grace the favourably received *Cantus, Descant*. Documenting performances in ecclesiastical and theatre spaces in Berlin, Montreal, Chicago and San Francisco, these are fully-fledged alternative readings rather than show-your-working sketches for the austere, numinous *Cantus*. Thus, Diaphonia Basilica's tremulous keyboard drone and sub-liminal chord changes evince Davachi's mediaeval-meets-ambient-minimalism hallmark, while Live In Chicago is an extended cathedral organ soundscape, part Renaissance étude, part Zen meditation, and Live In Berlin is similarly prolonged, this time favouring ethereal floes of synth punctuated by plucked guitars and celestial flutes. Immersive throughout, the album makes one nostalgic for the experience of subtly contemplative music filling a large physical space.

David Sheppard

Soho Rezanejad

★★★

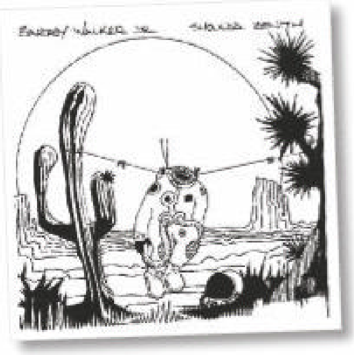
Perform And Surrender

SILICONE. DL

Danish-Iranian's electro organic odyssey live.

Since her 2018 debut album *Six Archetypes*, a forceful slab of dark-wave resistance, Soho Rezanejad has plotted an unconventional path. The following two-part *Honesty Without Compassion Is Brutality* was more experimental: sampled voices, electronic scree, symphonic ambience, starkly aching ballads. These live additions, with elements written the day of performance, follow suit. The 12-minute Surrender, threaded with sharp bird cries, is a viable soundtrack to Sir David Attenborough's series on environmental extinction. In shorter form, Rezanejad com-piles spirituals for the departed, both personal and global. Absence contrasts her soprano with sombre viola; she duets beatifically with birdsong on Hera, but any track named after the Norse goddess of death is destined to take a dark turn, as her voice disappears into an underworld of sound. Sleepless Solitude is pure distilled heartache: "All I do," she laments, "living the memory of our song."

Martin Aston



Barry Walker Jr

★★★

Shoulda Zenith

HOLY MOUNTAIN. CD/LP

A North Americans' radical pedal-steel manoeuvres from Portland, Oregon.

Not, perhaps, evidence of a seismic shift in musical culture, but one small trend this past year has been the emergence of a kind of ambient Americana. Albums by Luke Schneider, Suss and North Americans have all leaned hard on the more ethereal possibilities of the pedal steel, something that Barry Walker Jr – a key player on the North Americans set – explores as part of his solo remit on *Shoulda Zenith*. But alongside balmy steel meditations such as Derr Of The Schwann (Break Of The Dawn), there are much gnarlier excursions into twanging noise-rock (Up The Fan, Into The Keyhole), and frictional cosmic jams where Walker simultaneously draws on Jerry Garcia's most downhome and avant-garde impulses. Plus, to close, a final twist: Like A Prisoner, in which Walker reveals he can sing and compose fine, old school country ballads, too.

John Mulvey

Nick Jonah Davis

★★★★

When The Sun Came

THREAD. DL/LP

Derbyshire Primitive solo guitar instrumentals, anyone?

While Gwenifer Raymond has been rightfully acclaimed as a British guitarist putting a local spin on the American Primitive tradition, she's not the only one on these isles to have learned a bit from John Fahey, Jack Rose et al. Nick Jonah Davis, for instance, has been quietly mastering a parallel sound for the past decade, relocating Appalachian vibrations to the Derbyshire Dales. Big on slide as well as finger-picking, Davis's most obvious antecedent is probably Michael Chapman, who's long been adept at mingling transatlantic folk traditions with experimental tweaks: Goodfellow Of The Riverside here, in particular, captures a similar kind of intimate rowdiness and rough-hewn virtuosity. Recorded in the village church at Atlow for optimal reverberations, it's far from precious – like all the best guitar soli, Davis understands how this music can flow effortlessly between meditative spaces and pub backrooms.

John Mulvey

Still Corners

★★★★

The Last Exit

WRECKING LIGHT. CD/DL/LP

Fifth album of sultry desert twang from English-American duo.

Based in Woodstock NY, British singer Tessa Murray and American instrumentalist and producer Greg Hughes are beginning to perfect their desert spook. A step on from the sun-drenched but dark heart of Mazzy Star and Chris Isaak's Wicked Game (Static begins almost identically), they are as American as sidewalks. Murray's voice is a beautiful, dreamy magnet for Hughes's backdrops, which without losing their twang take all sorts of tangents: from the whistling on Crying, to the point where the instrumental Till We Meet Again starts gently and then peaks with the all-guns-blazing swirl of Dexys Midnight Runners' The Teams That Meet In Caffs. Murray always seems to be on the edge of imperious heartbreak, and when she ends A Kiss Before Dying with a curt "it's all over now", it sounds like the end of everything.

John Aizlewood

Still Corners: imperious heartbreak.

Chip Duden, Bernard Bur

Sunbirds

★★★

Cool To Be Kind

NECTAR. CD/DL

Former Housemartins and Beautiful South co-singer Dave Hemingway's new band.

Even Paul Heaton took time to blossom after The Beautiful South split and it's been more difficult still for Dave Hemingway, co-singer of A Little Time and many others, but rarely a co-writer. He's an infrequent songwriter on *Cool To Be Kind* too, but his voice – if Glenn Tilbrook were northern – remains appealingly conversational. Sunbirds are at their best when their distinctly British take on Americana evokes *Choke*-era Beautiful South, whether Hemingway is singing of the Humber Estuary on Meet You On The Northside, duetting with Laura Wilcockson on Holiday Monday or namechecking Gary Lineker in the countrified Gene Kelly. They lack Heaton's wordplay and covert anger, and the occasional grungy guitar solo jars rather than enhances, but there's real warmth to spare; Jack Parnell's son Marc adds jazzy drums and the closing Stars Still Shine is as bitter as it is beautiful.

John Aizlewood

Sunstack Jones

★★★★

Golden Repair

MAI 68. CD/DL/LP

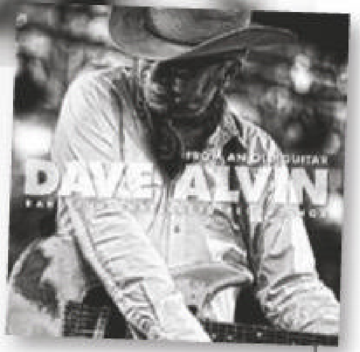
Absorbing follow-up to 2018's self-titled outing by the Chrisy Jones-led outfit.

This Liverpool based five-piece – three guitars, bass, drums – are chiefly influenced by The Byrds, Big Star and Buffalo Springfield and as such, their songs are full of heart-tugging melodies and delightful harmonies, which ponder love, life and time's passing, and inhabit a similar space to Teenage Fanclub and Beachwood Sparks. This fourth album was written while they were on tour with Buffalo Tom – lyrics scribbled in notebooks in the van, music worked up during soundcheck jams – so there is a beat romance to the results, especially evident on the mesmerising seven-minute-plus centrepiece Where You Gonna Go. Produced by Paul Den Heyer and recorded live at Chester's Faktory studio by The Verve's Simon Jones, Sunstack Jones remain under the radar but *Golden Repair* deserves a wider audience.

Lois Wilson

AMERICANA

BY SYLVIE SIMMONS



Dave Alvin

★★★★

From An Old Guitar: Rare And Unreleased Recordings

YEP ROC. CD/DL/LP

A collection of largely unreleased studio recordings from 2003-2019.

SIXTEEN SONGS – acoustic and electric; covers, originals and instrumentals; roots rock, folk and blues – and not a bad one among them. If you listened to the album before reading the subtitle, you might well take it for a new recording, Alvin's most wide-ranging, and maybe credit the pandemic for keeping him off of the road and in the studio. But they were recorded in different sessions over 16 years, though feel right at home with each other. Hear how opener Link Of Chain – a Chris Smithers song, here a dialogue between voice and guitar – shifts into a cool, bluesy, spoken-word Highway 61 Revisited, before moving on to the buoyant Variations On Earl Hooker's Guitar Rumba, and then slowing down into an old 3/4-time folk song, Alvin's voice now almost a croon. Other highlights include the guitar solo in revved-up rock'n'roller Albuquerque and his slow, swampy take on Marty Robbins' Man Walks Among Us.

ALSO RELEASED

Jimmy LaFave

★★★★

Highway Angels… Full Moon Rain

NIGHT TRIBE MUSIC. CD/DL

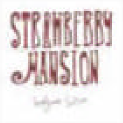
In 1988, a handful of years after moving to Austin, LaFave self-released this 10-song folk-blues-country album on cassette. A gem, it took top prize at that year's Austin Music Awards. He revisited a few of these songs on later albums, but here, nearly four years after his death, is the whole thing, remastered. The band is subtle and nuanced; his lyrics, as always, a cut above; his voice one of the best in the genre. Among many highlights: The Price Of Love; The Lone Wolf; and brilliant The Loneliness Of America.

Langhorne Slim

★★★★

Strawberry Mansion

DUALTONE. CD/DL/LP



Known for raucous live performances, Slim's first album since 2017's *Lost At Last Vol 1* feels personal and self-exploratory. Stream-of-consciousness, even, given the sheer number of songs (I stopped counting at 20) and the artlessness of the lyrics. But it's a compulsive listen, particularly the vulnerable folk-Americana Sing My Song, House On Fire and Last One Standing. and the clapboard-churchy love song Morning Prayer.

Rick Shea

★★★★

Love & Desperation

TRES PESCADORES. CD/DL

These 12 songs have an instant familiarity: the slow-slung blues of Blues At Midnight; the story-telling ballad title track featuring the devil, temptation and an errant wife; or honky tonk country Blues Stop Knockin' At My Door, where Shea's fine voice sounds like it could break into a yodel at any time were it not for sheer willpower. There's Mexican-Americana too (Juanita) and an instrumental (Mystic Canyon) that sounds like the perfect California sunset.

Thee Holy Brothers

★★★

My Name Is Sparkle

REGIONAL. DL

The debut album by LA veterans Marvin Etzioni and Willie Aron is an odd little outlier, funny and serious, holy and secular, ambitious and cool, with guitar, mandolin and lushly layered vocals. There's a mix of styles – folk (If God Let Go); hymn (Keep Crushing Me); country (Let The Great World Spin); early Costello (Elvis In Jerusalem); even solo Lennon. While the grand, grown-up psych-folk title track seems to suggest a hippy, Tommy-esque musical directed by Leonard Cohen. *SS*

Going up: Kiwi Jr enjoy the view at cruising altitude.

Nun fly with me

Canadian quartet's second album polishes their 'spiritually antipodean' pop-super-smarts. By **Keith Cameron**.

Kiwi Jr

★★★★

Cooler Returns

SUB POP. CD/DL/LP

ONE CHALLENGE facing Kiwi Jr as they embarked upon the successor to 2020's *Football Money* was how to finesse that debut album's groovy rock and drollery without losing the ramshackle charm. Years in the making, it came unburdened by preconception, casually dropping four-to-the-floor LOLs like Gimme More, wherein singer-guitarist Jeremy Gaudet drawled, "Gimme more Star Wars/Gimme open barre chords", like Jonathan Richman fronting The Cars on a lost Postcard 45. Smart work guys – but can you do that again while people are watching?

The 125-second entirety of opening track Tyler confirms that *Football Money* was no fluke. It also straightaway dips deeper than before into a plangent Kinksian pool, with well-turned lyrical knots ("You work for Microsoft/I scrape the wallpaper off in the new guest bedroom") amping the bittersweet aspect of this band's ostensibly larkish scheme.

Now based in Toronto, Kiwi Jr originally hail from Prince Edward Island's Charlottetown, and the pangs of relocation from small provincial city to metropolis still colour their songs, especially when a newly extended palette makes room for mournful harmonica. The R.E.M.-melancholic Only Here For A Haircut has Gaudet's mind navigating "From the QEH to the QEW", presumably meaning Charlottetown's main hospital and the Queen Elizabeth Highway out of Toronto that leads eventually to the USA. Undecided Voters' taut Wire-ish hustle notes its protagonist taking photos of Toronto's world famous CN Tower and locally renowned Honest Ed's department store sign, then takes a transatlantic leap to Glasgow's fire-stricken art school. Maid Marian's Toast, meanwhile, is a Modern Lovers-sugary farewell to a worker at "Kiwana's canteen" – a near namesake of a Charlottetown dairy bar.

As their name wryly acknowledges, Kiwi Jr believe disclosure is the best policy in matters of artistic inspiration. No band coyly indebted to Pavement would so often reference sport – specifically Stephen Malkmus's personal favourite tennis – while their absorption in '80s NZ garage bubblegum now extends from the joyously scuzzy likes of The Clean (laconic VU-motorik Dodger) and 3Ds (the carnivalesque fairground organ and ostinato riff of Domino) to find its full bloom on Nashville Wedding, the album's peak meringue: a mini-concerto of romantic mishap ("I wanna hold the minister's hand/Strangle the jangle-pop band") with baroque notes of The Chills fusing Maggie May and I Think We're Alone Now.

In lesser hands, their fervent referential scree could trip over its own eloquence. But sustaining momentum near-faultlessly across 13 songs and 37 minutes, *Cooler Returns* proves Kiwi Jr have the skills to match their smarts. As Jeremy Gaudet yelps on the title track, "I am not American, but I feel the beat sometimes". It's infectious, for sure.

Chris Abrahams

★★★★

Appearance

ROOM40. CD/DL

Necks pianist goes it alone, stealthily.

An Australian pianist with a colourful CV that includes shifts with The Triffids, Laughing Clowns and Midnight Oil, Chris Abrahams has focused for much of the past three decades on The Necks, the jazz-adjacent but mostly uncategorisable improvising trio beloved by The Bad Seeds and Underworld among many. He's also released a slew of solo albums, often pushing his keyboard work into ever more abstract territory. *Appearance*, though, is a straightforward, unadorned solo piano album, manna for those who love the Necks at their most genteel and ambient. Free of a rhythm section, Abrahams is more content than ever to let silence play as big a part as his notes, pushing past similarities with Keith Jarrett and into an even more rarefied space. Here, on these two gorgeous 20-minute études, he's closer to Erik Satie, the great Ethiopian pianist Emahoy Tsegué-Maryam Guébrou and, if you want a Necks analogue, 2013's minimalist masterpiece *Open*.

John Mulvey

Jim Ghedi

★★★

In The Furrows Of Common Place

BASIN ROCK. CD/DL/LP

Peak District-exploring folk guitarist vents his anger on political second album.

Jim Ghedi's 2018 debut album, *A Hymn For Ancient Land*, showcased his talent for lush guitar instrumentals and sensitivity to the particularities of place, roaming from Ireland's Mulroy Bay to Cwm Elan in Mid-Wales. Ghedi's second album hones in on the injustices faced by the people of the Peak District, where he grew up, with his newly-emancipated bruisingly big Yorkshire vocals ("We are torn by scavengers/Impoverished by damages," he rails on Stolen Ground). Ambitiously packing in influences from history, politics and literature, this album works best when it gives its ideas and sounds space, like on the ambient-flavoured Lamentations Of Round Oak Waters, inspired by 19th century poet John Clare, or on the affecting a cappella version of Ah Cud Hew by Durham singer Ed Pickford. Elsewhere, the bombast of Belfast Child-era Simple Minds flashes and burns often, lessening its emotional effects.

Jude Rogers

The Sensible Gray Cells

★★★

Get Back Into The World

DAMAGED GOODS. CD/DL/LP/MC

Second LP by Captain Sensible and Paul Gray, plus Johnny Moped's Marty Love.

In 2020, recently-returned Damned bassist Paul Gray partnered with pariah'd ex-Damned drum ace Rat Scabies to record a fifth album as Professor And The Madman; now Gray is back once more, this time with Damned chief Captain Sensible. That's a lot of Damned diaspora – and, between those two albums, also a vast amount of classic psychedelic rock, which as the peerless early '80s *Black Album* and *Strawberries* suggested, was always the theatrical punks' collective guilty pleasure. *Get Back Into The World* leans heavily on pop melodies to gild its garage-psych lilies, with song titles like Stupid Dictators, DJ With Half A Brain and What's The Point Of Andrew? hammering home their *à rebours* old-git message. But epic, trippy voyages such as Jam Tomorrow and Another World are the treasures. Really, the vintage Damned should just reunite; oh, they have…

Pat Gilbert

Trees Speak

★★★★

Shadows Form

SOUL JAZZ. CD/DL/LP

Adventures in synthscaping, avant-jazz and movie music, from Tucson, Arizona.

TREES SPEAK

Fraternal duo Daniel Martin Diaz and Damian Diaz evocatively describe their work as "translucent jams for a virtual autobahn". This second album in six months thus opens with a five-minute abstract synth throbathon (Large Array) and later artfully blends classical piano with digital strangeness, in each case vividly recalling 1977's *Cluster & Eno*. While its keyboard-centric thrills are many, with *Shadows Form* there's really no second guessing what may come next. Tear Kisser melds a jazzy shuffling rhythm, treated trumpets and timpani for smoky soundtrack vibes, then Automat's dubbed-out guitars signpost some post-millennial advance on trip hop. Elsewhere, 23 Skidoo's *concrète* otherness (Agonize Signal), Teeth Of The Sea's trumpet-toting genre-straddling (Magick Knives) and an all-pervasive sense of Snapped Ankles' neo-rave tribalism complete an album that's hardly coherent, but never boring, and often brain-bustingly inventive.

Andrew Perry

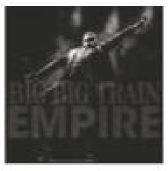
Big Big Train

★★★★

Empire

ENGLISH ELECTRIC. **CD/DL/BR**

A rare London live show last year by the standard-bearers of new UK prog.



If progressive rock seems like ancient musical history to you – as obsolete as, say, ragtime or polka music – then the best argument that the genre still has clout is this Bournemouth-based seven-piece. Big Big Train channel the prog ambitions of 50 years ago but mix in enough of themselves to create work that sounds vivid and fresh. *Empire* (as in Hackney) is a live set that also acts as a greatest hits, weighted towards their most recent studio album, *Grand Tour*, with its lavishly upholstered arrangements faithfully recreated by an added brass section. Applying themselves to lyrics celebrating variously Leonardo Da Vinci, space travel or bucolic old England, it is the melodic inspiration and careful design that sets Big Big Train's music apart. Their multi-part epics – East Coast Racer, Voyager – have all the technical skill of the best prog but none of the flatulence of the worst.

John Bungey

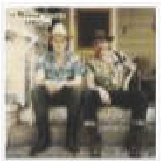
The William Loveday Intention

★★★★

Will There Ever Be A Day That You're Hung Like A Thief?

DAMAGED GOODS. **LP**

Second of four albums revealing Billy Childish's more musical side.



Last summer, Billy Childish and a core band of Nurse Julie and Wolf Howard went into Rochester's Ranscombe studios and recorded four albums under the William Loveday Intention banner to be issued consecutively over the winter months. This second in the series builds on October's *People Think They Know Me But They Don't Know Me*, and sees Childish occupying a more refined musical space than usual with help from Jim Riley on blues harp, Jon Barker on organ and The Wave Pictures' David Tattersall on guitar. Chief influences are *Highway '61 Revisited*-era Bob Dylan and Jacques Brel, effectively utilised on a new version of Thee Headcoats' I Don't Like The Man I Am, the original's clattering punk replaced with a more poetic reading over waltzing guitars and Al Kooper-styled wonky organ.

Lois Wilson

Smudge All Stars

★★★★

Smudge All Stars

PEGDOLL. **CD/DL/LP**

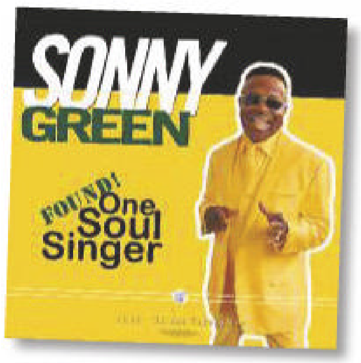
P-funk lives and breathes on star-studded party set, eight years in the making.

Having gained the ultimate seal of approval from Parliament-Funkadelic's colourful visionary George Clinton after collaborating on Up Is Just A Place, percussionist/producer Richie Stevens spent most of the next decade trying to match its wall-knocking party funk. His perseverance has paid off. Not only do his merry band trump it on synth-heavy party-starter Brutal Funk, spiralling along a fathomless groove by Jamiroquai's DJ D-Zire, strobe-lit by Mary Pearce's intense soul power, but a second laidback Clinton hook-up on the anatomically suspect Headache unveils his lesser captured sensitive side. Garlanded with distinctive parps from the Horny Horns (Fred Wesley, Alfred 'Pee Wee' Ellis) and precious dub cameos from Dennis Bovell and Lee 'Scratch' Perry, this head-nodding return to the Mothership sounds as reassuringly expensive as a 1990s Dr Dre production.

Andy Cowan

Sonny Green: wearing the blues well.

Pat Johnson



Sonny Green

★★★★

Found! One Soul Singer

LITTLE VILLAGE FOUNDATION. **CD/DL**

In his late seventies, soul man makes debut album.

He's been working the clubs and bars of South Los Angeles since 1969/70, and in the '70s made a few well-regarded singles, but if wider fame evaded Louisiana-born soul-blues singer Sonny Green, nor did he particularly seek it. And so at the age of 77, here is his debut LP. Influences are clear, the biggest being Bobby 'Blue' Bland on opener I'm So Tired, Blind Man and Green's 1971 single If You Want Me To Keep On Lovin' You Baby. I Beg Your Pardon draws on Johnnie Taylor's ballad style and he covers, gruffly and uptempo, Little Milton's If Walls Could Talk, while Syl Johnson's Back For A Taste Of Your Love makes you wonder what Willie Mitchell would've made of him. Not that producer Kid Andersen and a sharp band have let him down as Green's own style emerges – gutsy and frisky, a real in-the-room connection. It's a genuinely wonderful surprise.

Geoff Brown

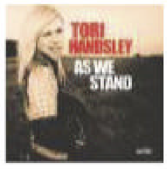
Tori Handsley

★★★★

As We Stand

CADILLAC. **CD/DL/LP**

British harpist defies easy categorisation on Moses Boyd-produced debut.



One of a small, almost cultish cabal of jazz harpists plying their rarefied trade, Tori Handsley's first full length cocks a snook at preconceptions. A thrilling three-way set with Melt Yourself Down bassist Ruth Goller and drum colossus Moses Boyd, from Rivers Of Mind's opening bars it takes no prisoners, Handsley summoning a distorted raw power far removed from the relaxing glissandi of Alina Bzhezhinska or Alice Coltrane. While it's matched by the teeming heartache of Out Of Sight, Out Of Mind, a sub-prog paean to eco-destruction, and Home's intense power play, a switch to piano on Polar Retreat shows a more philosophical side. There's traces of both EST and Mahavishnu Orchestra in grand finale What's In A Tune, whose heady grooves and resounding riffs condense the best of what's gone before.

Andy Cowan

BLUES

BY TONY RUSSELL

Elvin Bishop & Charlie Musselwhite

★★★★

100 Years Of Blues

ALLIGATOR. **CD/DL**

Two old friends celebrate a century of entwined tradition and innovation.

THIS IS an album by and for senior citizens of Bluesville. Joe Bonamassa fans probably will not care for it. These blues are Old School (one of the songs), Blues For Yesterday (another), the mood reminiscent, the past flavouring the music like cigar smoke in an old clubroom. Sonny Boy Williamson, Leroy Carr and Roosevelt Sykes are namechecked; the two principals – Birds Of A Feather (another song) – join the lineage of exquisite harmonica-guitar duets like Muddy Waters and Little Walter, or Johnny Shines and Shakey Horton. In Good Times, Elvin Bishop (above right) slices the air with slide-guitar playing in the spirit of Earl Hooker as Charlie Musselwhite (above left) asks, "Where did all our good times go?" They went, surely, into being able to make music like this: mature, masterly, endlessly rewarding.

ALSO RELEASED

Erin Harpe

★★★

Meet Me In The Middle

JUICY JUJU/VIZZTONE. **CD/DL**

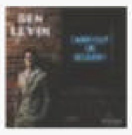
Erin Harpe is an unmannered singer and assured guitarist, with an assertive touch and a firm grasp of country blues idiom, revealed in performances of Memphis Minnie's What's The Matter With The Mill and Lucille Bogan's I Hate That Train Called The M&O. Among her original compositions, One Fine Day is set to the gorgeous melody of the old parlour guitar piece Spanish Fandango.

Ben Levin

★★★

Carryout Or Delivery

VIZZTONE. **CD/DL**



At 21, Ben Levin carries the garland, or burden, of being considered a prodigy, but new listeners can be reassured. He plays blues piano with knowledge and chops, sings with appealing world-weariness, and writes cleverly in blues and old-school R&B styles. It would be exciting to hear him work with collaborators who challenge him a little more than his family band do.

New Moon Jelly Roll Freedom Rockers

★★★

Volume I

STONY PLAIN. **CD/DL**

This originated as a "potluck" session in 2007, focused on Charlie Musselwhite with Jim, Luther and Cody Dickinson, but drew in Alvin Youngblood Hart and Jimbo Mathus. Musselwhite recalled '20s Memphis and '60s Chicago; Hart reinterpreted Charlie Patton and The Mississippi Sheiks. Two trivial sing-alongs aside, the music has weight, seriousness and style. A *Volume 2* is promised.

Kirk Fletcher

★★★

My Blues Pathway

CLEOPATRA. **CD/DL/LP**

Fletcher has written with Richard Cousins, sometime bass player with Robert Cray, and some of the ambience of Cray's early work resonates in tracks like Struggle For Grace or Love Is More Than A Word. To these and songs like Fatt(en)ing Frogs For Snakes, Fletcher brings tonally rich guitar-playing and a flexible voice seldom revealed before. *TR*

Aaron Frazer: making a big impression.

Joy sticks

When your drummer has a voice to die for, you let him sing, says David Hutcheon.

Aaron Frazer

★★★★

Introducing…

DEAD OCEANS. CD/DL/LP

TO THESE EARS, Durand Jones & The Indications were the soundtrack to those last good times we shared. With their stew of pre-funk James Brown, finger-snap Stax and Philly soul, the Indiana-based quintet grew from upstairs rooms in pubs to selling out decent-sized halls as 2018 turned into 2019. They broadened their palette between their eponymous debut LP (recorded for $452) and *American Love Call*, on which drummer Aaron Frazer handled vocals on five tracks, his high tenor a showstopper; and, as 2020 neared, their momentum suggested the big league was there for the taking.

Introducing…
AARON FRAZER

But something was happening, Mr Jones, and we all know what it was. This schism is going to cause many groups to press 'reset', but there's more needs rebooting than just the bands. If Frazer's voice brings Curtis Mayfield to mind, so do the words on his solo debut: Bad News could be about a girl best avoided, but read between the lines – "Can you hear me? I'm crying" – and it's as pointed as anything on *There's No Place Like America Today*, while the bass line can't hide its debt to Inner City Blues.

Indeed, the new era finds Frazer sitting comfortably atop those foundation stones of soul. Recorded in a week-long session in Nashville with Dan Auerbach and American Sound Studio veterans the Memphis Boys – and out on the first release date of 2021, January 8, in a nod to another Aaron, surname Presley – authenticity is a hefty part of its DNA. Barry White wouldn't have improved on the orchestration of You Don't Wanna Be My Baby, James Brown crops up in the opening notes of Girl On The Phone, Eugene Record couldn't make you miss a lover more, and Over You is a frantic stomp that will have Wiganites salivating.

Though all are welcome, Frazer isn't courting a Northern audience of British dancers but one of America's prime markets for soul, the Chicano lowrider scene, where doo wop, gospel and ballads blast from vintage cars – and Ride With Me feels written as an anthem for that scene – where the tensions invoked by strained, pleading falsettos transcend the limitations of real life, where redemption is always just a shot away. The hard-scrabble life is put into perspective – "A brand new foundation, and I thank you so much, 'cos I found salvation" – on the closing, hymn-like Leanin' On Your Everlasting Love.

We can but hope dawn brings a new day, with the sunlight and opportunities for all that Frazer seeks. About the only quibble you'll have is with the title. Music this soulful should need no introduction.

Angel Bat Dawid & Tha Brothahood

★★★★

Live

INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM. DL/LP

Sensational concert set from Chicago's latest jazz star.

A singer, clarinettist and composer, Dawid's 2019 solo debut *The Oracle* presented a spectral new iteration of spiritual jazz: multitracked meditations recorded on a phone app. Those hushed invocations, however, now sound like a mere prelude to the righteous force of this full band workout. Incensed by racist treatment in the run-up to this November 2019 Berlin show, Dawid at times seems to sob, at others roar, leading her band through rousing, free jazz-inflected workouts that recall Archie Shepp's Attica Blues, Phil Cohran, Horace Tapscott, and Fontella Bass's work with the Art Ensemble Of Chicago. The fragility of *The Oracle* occasionally resurfaces – on a beautiful What Shall I Tell My Children Who Are Black – but it's brilliantly absorbed into a shifting tapestry where music and spoken word collapse into one another, and a vivid, unstinting picture of black experience emerges. A major talent, stepping up.

John Mulvey

Alysse Gafkjen

Daniel Knox

★★★★

Won't You Take Me With You

H.P. JOHNSON PRESENTS. DL/LP

Fifth studio drama from Illinois' favourite crooning storyteller.

In the cover photo, a woman is out walking at night. But to where? And will she take Knox with her? Such uncertain and mostly unsettling narratives are the American's bread and butter, with his delicious baritone and trademark vibrato lending gravitas to every stinging line. *WYTMWY* is Knox in typically epic form, a suspenseful fusion of country-folk ballads and Twin Peaks cabaret. But there's a fresh clarity here too, perhaps due to being recorded much faster than previous albums. Opening with the scenario, "I want to be right where I'm supposed to be/I want to kill everyone close to me," (Rat Pack swinger King Of The Ball), Knox unspools tales of mystery, romance, sex, violence and solitude. Key track I Saw Someone Alone ("Something brushed up against me at midnight") could be about any, or all, of those things.

Martin Aston

Hans-Joachim Roedelius

★★★★

Drauf Und Dran

GROENLAND. DL

Solo pianistics of Cluster and Harmonia founder comes with a book of its notation.

Hans-Joachim Roedelius has said that he doesn't want his music to be considered as ambient, and here it positively demands attention. Tim Story, his friend and collaborator, reckons his approach to the piano is similar now to the way he has used synthesizers and electronics. His playing on the instrument has always been richly melodic with a stately poise, and here Unbedingt flows like a song. Other pieces show a Satie-like playfulness, but on Gerade, Roedelius evokes the eerie atmospheres of Schubert's Winterreisse, and the shadowy cadences of Ohnedies contain some spicy dissonances. These home recordings are compositions with the fluency of improvisation and *Drauf Und Dran* feels like a step forward, which is perhaps remarkable for an 86-year-old musician. And the title's English translation, 'On And On', suggests there is still a lot more for him to explore.

Mike Barnes

The Moons

★★★★

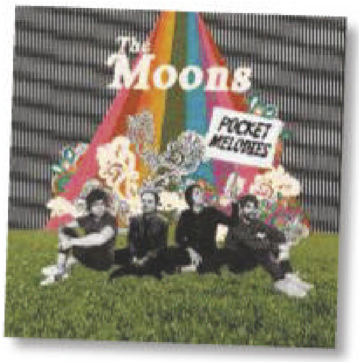
Pocket Melodies

COLORAMA. CD/DL/LP

Fourth album by psychedelic pop group helmed by Paul Weller band veteran.

Brazilian-born, Northampton-raised multi-instrumentalist Andy Crofts has helmed The Moons since 2006, the outfit's recording career running parallel with his duties in Weller's group. This follow-up to 2014's oft trippy *Mindwaves* shows yet another leap in Crofts' confidence as a writer and arranger, its defiantly English take on harmony rock, psychedelia and '80s dream-pop buttressed with Kinks-y rags and, in the exceptional soft-rocker Midnight, what sounds like a gigantic 'lost' AOR radio smash beamed from the late '70s. The album's lyrical sentiments can be quite endearing: check Sleep's conceit that the world is a safer place when its leaders are asleep, or the plight of the man adrift in his spaceship in Tunnel Of Time (co-penned by Weller) unable to find a homely planet to land on. Abetted by the resonant ghosts of Abbey Road's Studio 2 where it was created, *Pocket Melodies* sees a genuine talent coming of age.

Pat Gilbert



Anrimeal

★★★★

Could Divine

DEMO/CROSSNESS. **DL/LP**

Mysterious debut long-player for the Portuguese aural sculptor.

With titles like Could Divine, Elegy For An Empty Coffin and Encaustic Witches, it's unsurprising that Anrimeal's debut album sounds like the accompaniment to shadowy archive footage of esoteric rituals conducted on a remote, wind-blasted heath. Anrimeal is the London-based, though Portugal-born, Ana Rita de Melo Alves. Each composition is constructed from multiple building blocks: a folky guitarist with a yen for Nico; a disembodied voice weaving through crackling electronica; a minimalist solo pianist in recital; a church choir; muttered extracts from scriptures. All deftly combine in a unified sound-picture confirming that Melo Alves approaches music as a whole rather than its individual elements. There are touchstones: Elegy For An Empty Coffin posits what a de-glitched múm could be, while sections of the title track evoke the Susanne Sundfør of *Ten Love Songs*. Dark, yet assured and compelling.

Kieron Tyler

Enrique Rodriguez & The Negra Chiway Band

★★★

Fase Liminal

SOUL JAZZ. **CD/DL/LP**

Chilean composer's deep meld of spiritual jazz with Latin American rhythms.

Fase Liminal's appeal largely rests on the two contrasting takes of Dondé? that bookend it and take up half its length. The first is imperious – cymbals clang and pianos circle menacingly as it rumbles into being amid a haze of deep drones and hammered percussion. They click into a deeper gear midway, entwined horns snaking out an indelible melody that's the basis for a slow descent into off-the-scale flute mayhem on its distended second iteration. While Descenso's modal pianos and Buddhist chants and Vindakalla-Welukan's dramatic vocalese teem with the same dark energy, an edge towards full-on disco on Paso Firme brings light in the shade. An expansive offering that reminds of Sun Ra's or Horace Tapscott's Arkestras, bound by percussive spills and thrills.

Andy Cowan

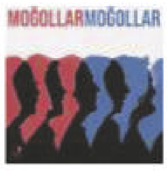
Moğollar

★★★

Anatolian Sun Part I & Part 2

NIGHT DREAMER. **DL/LP**

Turkey's 'Anadolu pop' pioneers' re-record their greatest hits.



The first Turkish group to marry the ancient folk traditions and traditional instruments of rural Anatolia with wailing '60s psychedelia and western pop, Moğollar's trailblazing has barely dwindled with time. Hingeing, then as now, around the surging interplay of Taner Öngür's taut, tension-filled bass and Cahit Berkay's exuberant saz riffs above a bed of pulsing keys and unstoppable, almost motorik percussion, the sheepskin-clad sextet veer wildly across the musical map, from clattering folk-pop thrills (Gel Gel) to strident protest anthems (Bi'Sey Yapmali) and quiet storm ruminations (Alageyik Destanı). The quickfire funky psych rock-outs such as Toprak Ana, Çığrık and the J Dilla-endorsed Haliç'te Güneşin Batışı impact with enduring force, as subtle shades of Popol Vuh, Led Zeppelin and even Quicksilver Messenger Service sugar its tripped-out delights.

Andy Cowan

Moğollar: tripped-out Turkish delights.

Snow Palms

★★★

Land Waves

VILLAGE GREEN. **CD/DL/LP**

Sparkling expeditions into the sensual.

'Kojo Yakei' is leisure activity in Japan, translating as "factory night view": after-dark sightseers marvel at the lights of glistening factories, refineries and such. On Snow Palms' third LP, Kojo Yakei is a composition grounded in Philip Glass and Terry Riley as a wordless chorale wafts like smokestack vapours. It could complement a coach gliding past a smelting plant. While analogous musically, each of *Land Waves*' seven tracks takes a different journey: Atom Dance and Evening Rain Gardens soundtrack sensory experiences. Snow Palms was previously the solo vehicle of author and MOJO contributor David Sheppard, now joined by Matt Gooderson and, contributing intermittent vocals, the latter's partner Megan. Meshing electronics with clarinet, glockenspiels and marimbas, *Land Waves* is a warm, human take on what might be clinical.

Kieron Tyler

Tamar Aphek

★★★

All Bets Are Off

KILL ROCK STARS. **CD/DL/LP**

Heavy duty solo debut from 'Israel's guitar goddess'.

Aphek had sung in a children's choir, taken piano lessons and been educated at a music conservatory; then during her military service she heard Fugazi, Slint and Shellac, picked up a guitar, knocked hell out of it and folded in some languid jazz. A veteran of two bands, her solo outing is like an avenging Wonder Woman kicking out the jams, by turns furious and touching. Russian Winter surrounds Aphek's sophisticated vocal with JCB-sized reverb: "I'll fight the Russian winter straight into your heart/You'll say you can't see blood but I plan to miss that part." Then, with sleazy sax and off-kilter guitar, Show Me Your Pretty Side slinks on like a cross between P.J. Harvey and Morphine. Occasionally, the freeform dissonance breaks things down too much, but a hauntingly skewed take on As Time Goes By is worth sticking around for.

Glyn Brown

WORLD

BY DAVID HUTCHEON

MARIZA
CANTA
AMALIA

Mariza

★★★★

Mariza Sings Amália

WARNER MUSIC PORTUGAL. **CD/DL**

Eighth outing from the modern face of fado.

IT'S FAIR TO say Mariza has hit a ceiling, her sales slipping in the past decade, and it's questionable if an album of fado songs made famous by Amália Rodrigues, the undisputed queen of the Portuguese blues, will turn things around for her. Taken on its own merits, however, this neatly captures the contradictions inherent in the Mozambique-born singer's rise – young voice/old style. Mariza first came to attention in the immediate wake of Rodrigues's death in 1999. And now, on the centenary of her birth, 10 of Amália's songs (Lagrima, Come Que Voz, Gaivota, there's no fear of tackling the classics) have been given new orchestral arrangements by Jacques Morelenbaum, who also brought a luxurious, lush feel to *Transparente* 15 years ago. It's an uptown, glamorous sort of blues, then, but Mariza has the voice for it. You have to wonder what's next, however.

ALSO RELEASED

Lo'Jo

★★★

Transe De Papier

YOTANKA. **CD/DL/LP**

TRA
NSE
PAP
IER

On recent albums – the French ensemble are on number 17 – there has been a reserved air, but this is a more convincing affair. It's the morning after a big night. "No sin, no redemption," sing Yamina and Nadia, suggesting we are at least halfway there; meanwhile, Denis Péan never sounded more Aznavour-like. Guests include Tony Allen and Robert Wyatt.

Skinshape

★★★★

Umoja

LEWIS RECORDINGS. **CD/DL/LP**

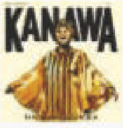
For his fifth album under the Skinshape moniker, William Dorey digs yet deeper into the warm sounds of vintage West African funk and soul to conjure up a psychedelic global blend. If you like Khruangbin's surf/lounge hybrid, this is absolutely one for you, no question, though impressively traditional-sounding percussion sets the publicity-shy Londoner apart from the Texans.

Nahawa Doumbia

★★★★

Kanawa

AWESOME TAPES FROM AFRICA. **CD/DL/LP/MC**



Doumbia has been a star in Mali for 40 years, and her first new album on ATFA (after 10 years of reissues for the label) is a cracker, multi-layered funk with ngoni, guitar and kamelé ngoni weaving a thick stew together. No messing with the classic Wassoulou groove here: this is every bit as good as her landmark 1987 *Didadi*.

Ayom

★★★

Ayom

AMPLIFICA. **CD/DL**

It's never the wrong time for a genre-blending slice of Brazilian-Angolan-Cape Verdean swing enhanced with accordion. The star of the show is singer Jabu Morales, but the Barcelona-based sextet (three of them percussionists) are a team, devouring styles from a transatlantic triangle. Nothing remarkable happens, but you'll feel the sun on your face, and that's no bad thing. *DH*

FILTER ALBUMS EXTRA

MART AVI
Vegas Never Sets

Mart Avi

★★★★

Vegas Never Sets

PORRIDGE BULLET. **DL/LP**

On LP six, arch Estonian auteur presents richly realised future pop, vaporous balladry, hyperborean soul and even some glitching drum'n'bass. Layered tones and peculiar humours underline fugitive Bowie/Scott Walker tendencies. He'd make an excellent pop star. *IH*

Grandbrothers

★★★

All The Unknown

CITY SLANG. **CD/DL/LP**

Düsseldorf pair's third album is a rich fusion of altered electronics and classical piano. Slivers of house, techno and old school hip-hop beats are intricately paired with dense arpeggios for a wide angled showcase full of gathering tension and suspense. *AC*

LANDE HEKT
GOING TO HELL

Lande Hekt

★★★

Going To Hell

GET BETTER. **CD/DL/LP**

Muncie Girl's solo debut has a first-person directness and grunge-schooled contrasting of melody with clamour. Songs like 80 Days Of Rain sound both stream-of-consciousness and persuasively catchy. Where such songs leave their mark, it's indelible. *JB*

SONGS FROM HOME

Fred Hersch

★★★★

Songs From Home

PALMETTO. **CD/DL**

Elegant jazz pianist shows his interpretive range. Riding a Beatles groove, re-daubing Joni Mitchell in impressionistic colours, sauntering through Duke Ellington or Wichita Lineman, Hersch opens each song up anew to speak aptly of the present. *AC*

SARATHY KORWAR & UPAJ COLLECTIVE

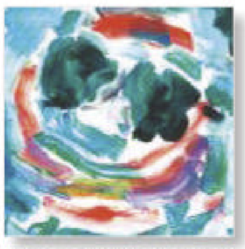
Sarathy Korwar/ UPAJ Collective

★★★★

Night Dreamer Direct-To-Disc Sessions

NIGHT DREAMER. **DL/LP**

One foot in Indian classical, another in jazz-improv, a heady spiritual trip driven by Korwar's percussive mastery. The collective talents are fully aglow reworking State Of Bengal's Flight IC 408. *AC*



Landshapes

★★★★

Contact

BELLA UNION. **CD/DL/LP**

Combining Au Pairs' post-punk repetition with Auto-Tune and beautiful melody, this Bristol group's third LP fully immerses them in a cathartic wall-of-sound. Their three female voices glide over charged songs about love, gender conflict and belonging. *LO'B*

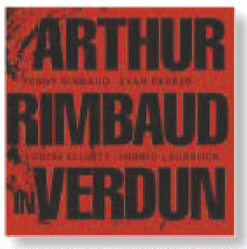
Midnight Sister

★★★★

Painting The Roses

JAGJAGUWAR. **CD/DL/LP**

Juliana Giraffe's elastic phrasing on Doctor Says or Wednesday Baby's Carpenters lilt is key to the LA duo's second. Other highlights: My Elevator Song draws from Julia Holter's vintage Hollywood mood board; Sirens' sharply defined disco drama. *JB*



Penny Rimbaud

★★★★

Arthur Rimbaud In Verdun

ONE LITTLE INDEPENDENT. **CD/DL**

High-concept with Crass man and his poetic namesake amid 1916's tragic battleground. A theatrical pile-up of harrowing imagery (including Anarchy In The UK) amid squirming sax from Evan Parker, Ingrid Laubrock and Louise Elliott. *AC*

Farmer Dave Scher

★★★★

Farmer Dave & The Wizards Of The West

BIG POTATO. **CD/DL/LP**

Ex-Beachwood Spark splices celestial cowboy vibes with Kurt Vile alt-classicism. Picks: Ocean Eyes' warped shimmer; Mutant Pill's lysergic country; the Byrdsy Babe Got Plans. *JB*

Wardruna

★★★

Kvitravn

MUSIC FOR NATIONS. **CD/DL/LP**

The lamenting melodies on former Bergen black metaller's overlong but immersive fifth LP take Norse history and old folk instruments (goat-horn, Kravik lyre) into new spheres across raw, deeply resonant songs. Packs a surprising emotional punch. *AC*

EXTENDED PLAY

Barry Jenkins/Wilco

Yankee Purple Foxtrot

With solo albums by Jeff Tweedy and Nels Cline, and a hefty box set of 1999's *Summerteeth*, Wilco fans have hardly been starved of music lately; if they were, they could always follow Tweedy's instructions in his new book, How To Write One Song, and make some themselves. Further diversion, though, can be found from an unlikely source. It transpires that Barry Jenkins, eminent film director of Moonlight fame, has a subversive love for Wilco's landmark 2002 set, *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*. Hence *Yankee Purple Foxtrot*, Jenkins' remake of the entire album (streaming at audiomack.com), in which he groggily croons over warped versions by The Chopstars, masters of the "chopped and screwed" remix style born out of Houston hip-hop. It proves to be a brilliant idea: the fundamental wooziness of the production style only amplifying these songs' uncanny air of dislocation: "Voices escape singing sad sad songs," indeed. *JM*

Moonlight director moonlights: Barry Jenkins with (inset) Jeff Tweedy.

DENISON WITMER
AMERICAN FOURSQUARE

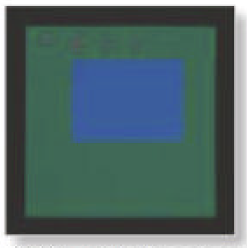
Denison Witmer

★★★

American Foursquare

ASTHMATIC KITTY. **CD/DL/LP**

Moving back to his hometown in Pennsylvania inspired an album of wistful introspection from Sufjan Stevens' longtime collaborator. Set to starkly lovely instrumentation, its songs probe at the tender spot where nostalgia and melancholy overlap. *JB*



Mike Wexler

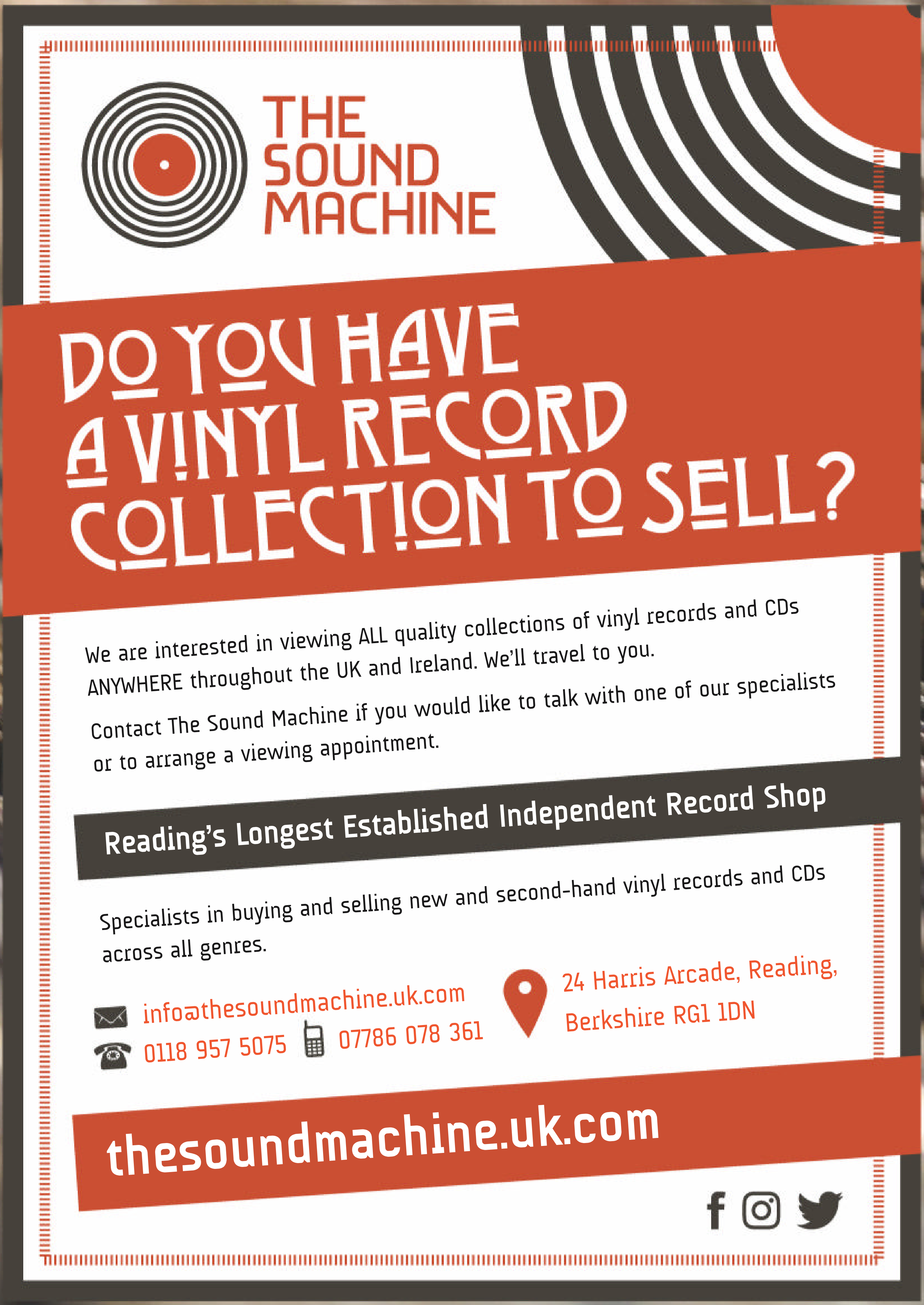
★★★★

Mike Wexler With Synthetic Love Dream

THREE: FOUR. **CD/DL/LP**

The Brooklynite's early records (cf 2007's *Sun Wheel*) were eldritch psych-folk, but this hook-up with an "outsider Wrecking Crew" is jazzier, lighter, satisfying. Syd Barrett makes *Bryter Later*, roughly. *JM*

Eyevine, Getty



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So many roads

On 35 discs, the prime years of "the godfather of British blues" with sidekicks including Eric Clapton, Peter Green and Mick Taylor, all en route to rock stardom. By **John Bungey**.

John Mayall

★★★★

The First Generation 1965-1974

MADFISH. CD

ON THE face of it, John Mayall is an unlikely musical icon. He's a pretty average guitarist and keyboard player, his singing can be flat and nasal, and his lyrics are often back-of-an-envelope standard. But to expect the man from Macclesfield who became the key figure in the British blues boom to be some sort of flying-fingered virtuoso is to miss the point. Mayall's prime skill has always been as a bandleader who in the 1960s created musical arenas where the young talents he recruited could flourish. He saw his ever-changing personnel – there were 15 line-ups between 1963 and 1970 – as a family. As such, Mayall, in his thirties, was a father figure to Eric Clapton, Mick Taylor or, the most junior of all, bassist Andy Fraser, later of Free, who joined aged 15.

A road dog allergic to showbiz flam, Mayall steadfastly refused to steer his Blues Breakers from the chosen path in search of shiny pop success, as The Animals, The Yardbirds or The Rolling Stones were doing. Instead, he kept faith with the deep, dark, cultish sounds that had travelled under the radar from the Mississippi Delta via Chicago to London. Mayall would be teacher and guide to young souls bored by trad jazz and who wanted to voice a musical message more profound than "I wanna hold your hand".

His debut album, the live *John Mayall Plays John Mayall* from 1965, is energetic, largely generic R&B of its time – you can imagine Austin Powers frugging away on a sticky dancefloor. It was the arrival of a troubled young ex-Yardbird that made the music world take notice. You can't over-estimate the impact of *Bluesbreakers: John Mayall With Eric Clapton* (1966), the first of a trilogy of albums that defined British electric blues. The lead guitarist played his Les Paul through an overdriven Marshall amp at unprecedented volume to create a raw, dense tone with long sustain. More than 50 years on it remains the default setting for white blues-rock players, from pub band axe-wranglers to Joe Bonamassa. The album still sounds tough and adult – Robert Johnson and Otis Rush reborn in Ealing Blues Club.

Clapton soon quit, heading for thunderous supergroup glory with Cream, which gave Peter Green the unenviable task of replacing "god" on *A Hard Road* (1967). There are more Mayall tunes here, written in reverential 12-bar style – fast, slow, medium. It is less of a guitar-fest but when Green does burst through his playing is fierce, spare and spine-tingling. Soon he'd be off to form Fleetwood Mac with two other Mayall men, bassist John McVie and drummer Mick Fleetwood. In Green's self-penned showcase The Supernatural you can hear pre-echoes of the Mac of Black Magic Woman and The Green Manalishi.

Mayall then signed up the teenaged Mick Taylor, whose precocious skills included killer slide licks. *Crusade* (1967) was recorded in seven hours (the words "take 14" were never heard at a Mayall session) and varies the blues'n'boogie by experimenting with a horn section. The two volumes of *The Diary Of A Band* (1967) better show off Taylor's burgeoning talent, but the "diary" soundbites and fade-outs make this a frustrating document of a clearly red-hot live unit. No wonder The Rolling Stones wanted its best member.

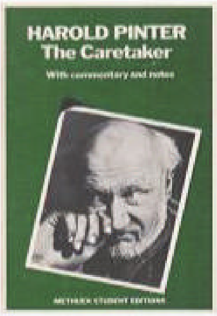
> **"Listen to the playing John Mayall can coax from those around him – say Eric Clapton or Mick Taylor."**

That year also brought a Mayall solo long-player, *The Blues Alone*. With a heroically energetic sexual appetite, he was never short of a muse for his odes of love, lust and loss, but these dusty renderings sound trapped in the past.

Much more interesting is *Bare Wires* (1968), primarily the suite of songs brooding on the break-up of his first marriage. There are folk and jazz influences, *Astral Weeks*-style introspection, and a fiddle. *Bare Wires* broke him in the States and stands up well. On *Blues From Laurel Canyon* (also 1968), the hippy spirit meets the blues as Mayall offers – softly and jazzily – his impressions of Los Angeles.

But the big stylistic change came with *The Turning Point* (1969). Fed up with loud bands, Mayall unplugged. This loose and lovely live set, with Jon Mark playing finger-style acoustic guitar and Johnny Almond on sax and flutes, is not just a turning point, it's a high point and sets a rootsy new direction. Mayall's simple songs create a mood and a framework for vivid instrumental workouts. *Empty Rooms* (1969) is an enjoyable studio set by the same team that doesn't reach the same heights. For *USA Union* (1970) Mayall, now resident in Laurel Canyon, tried the same trick with Americans, including Harvey Mandel (guitar) and the soaring violin of Sugarcane Harris. *Jazz Blues Fusion* (1972) could be more accurately called Funk Blues Fusion; it's full of fluent soloing over easy grooves by relaxed players clearly enjoying themselves (and not overly troubled by rehearsal).

And that is the key to understanding Mayall's achievements. When he strays from the blues and tries to write statement songs about, say, political unrest or drug misuse – as he does on *The Latest Edition* (1974) – the results are often lacklustre. Listen instead to the playing he can coax from those around him – say Clapton, Taylor and Mandel on Force Of Nature from the reunion album *Back To The Roots* (1971). The unreleased vintage audience recordings included in this huge box set are in grim lo-fi – but it's a thrill to hear through the murk Peter Green tearing into Looking Back (a decade before Dr. Feelgood) or Mick Taylor's burning slide on Ridin' On The L & N. All these men progressed to much bigger stages but, to these ears, they never played better.



BACK STORY: BLUES LAID BARE

- Schlepping around Britain in the band's Ford Thames van in the mid-'60s, there were many hours to fill. One particularly hot summer, Mayall found a unique way to buff up his suntan. An accomplished DIYer who had once lived in a self-built treehouse, he placed a six-foot long platform on the roof rack and affixed 18in high walls around the edges. This allowed him to lie sunbathing in his underpants unseen en route to gigs. Another pastime – inside the van – involved the bandleader, John McVie and Eric Clapton shouting out lines to each other from Harold Pinter's then new psychological drama The Caretaker (above). All three were big fans.

Michael Putland

It's a hard road: John Mayall's trilogy of mid-'60s albums defined British blues.

Nana Mouskouri: puts the ease into easy listening.

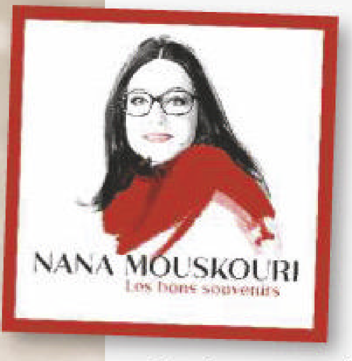
Nana Mouskouri

★★★

Les Bons Souvenirs

WRASSE/MERCURY. CD/DL

Two-CD set of the Greek's French recordings, 1961-2007.



SUCH WAS Nina Mouskouri's ubiquity in the glory days of easy-listening – not to forget the ease with which Benny Hill and Ronnie Barker parodied her – the reasons why she rose so high are often overlooked. Yet in the early 1960s, when she broke through internationally after a succession of Greek hits, she really exuded class – deep cuts include an exquisite long-player with Quincy Jones. Her French albums of that decade are gorgeous, though: Manos Hadjidakis's songs, orchestras led by the likes of Michel Legrand and Jacques Denjean (who worked with Zouzou, Elsa and Françoise Hardy), plus a voice that comes as sweet balm if you have overdosed on yé-yé girls. – what's not to like? The second disc finds the music settling into a bland, trans-European formula suitable for humungous global sales, but, seriously, 1961-8 Mouskouri could do little wrong.

David Hutcheon

Various

★★★★

Happy Times: The Songs Of Dan Penn & Spooner Oldham Vol 2

ACE. CD/DL

More deep cuts from the Muscle Shoals/Memphis duo's gem-filled songbook.

HAPPY TIMES

Twenty-four key tracks from the songwriters who met in their teens and by their early twenties were chief architects of the Muscle Shoals sound coming out of Fame studios. Their songwriting was defined by a warmth and deep affinity with its subject matter, demonstrated on captivating pop (The Box Tops' Happy Times), stirring country (Bobby Bare's In The Same Old Way), but mainly soul; see Percy Sledge's rejoiceful I Love Everything About You, June Conquest's Northern dancer I Do, Arthur Conley's scorching You Really Know How To Hurt A Guy and Jeanie Greene's sublime I'll Take Care Of You. Meanwhile, I'll Be Your Baby by Spooner's Crowd, an atmospheric instrumental in waltz time featuring Oldham on piano, was leased to Chess as the flip to his Two In The Morning 45 and forgotten about until now.

Lois Wilson

Various

★★★★

This Is Jamaica: Ska Presenting The Skatalites

ROCKA SHACKA. CD/LP

Reissue of key 1964 Studio One ska compilation.

Iconic act The Skatalites defined ska as the Studio One house band. This 1964 compilation was the first to reference them by name and although mento adaptation Salt Lane Gal is the only track to credit the group alone, its players provide the backing on everything here, the set alternating rousing ska vocals, such as The Wailers' anti-rude boy Simmer Down, with scintillating instrumentals, such as Roland Alphonso's Lee Harvey Junior, on which several horn players solo in turn. Andy & Joey's Wonder No More is a counterpart to You're Wondering Now (memorably covered by The Specials), and Bongo Tango an intense minor-key excursion with dramatic burru drumming from Lloyd Knibb. CD-only bonus tracks include obscure ska folk song adaptations by the little-known Blue Beats, plus Heaven & Earth, a fearsome Don Drummond trombone instrumental that send shivers up the spine.

David Katz

The Bathers

★★★★

Sunpowder

MARINA. CD/DL/LP

Remastered CD and vinyl debut for cult hero's mid-'90s chamber-folk beauty.

A gleaming – though now largely forgotten – facet of Scotland's '80s guitar-pop goldrush, Glasgow group Friends Again were victims of major label cluelessness. After one album, frontman Chris Thomson formed The Bathers, a floating collective of chamber-folk artisans. Over time, Thomson's vocal dropped a couple of octaves to suit a mood-board that evolved away from pop-soul toward '70s Tom Waits and '80s Van Morrison with increasingly James Joyce-like word tangles. By the time he reached *Lagoon Blues* (1993), *Sunpowder* (1995) and *Kelvingrove Baby* (1997) – all three now reissued – Thomson was making the best work of his life. There's little variation between them, but newbies should start with *Sunpowder*, for the orchestrated For Saskia alone, but also secret weapon Elizabeth Fraser (Cocteau Twins), who gilds Danger In Love, The Angel On Ruskin and The Night Is Young with her trademark angelic fluttering.

Martin Aston

Jackie McLean

★★★★

It's Time

BLUE NOTE. LP

20th century jazz – still sounds modern in the 21st.

One of the post-Bird hard bop greats, alto saxophonist Jackie McLean's seams-bursting attack demanded attention. He expanded on Charlie Parker's complex freneticism to include other elements. In this remastered Tone Poet Vinyl Edition of the 1964 date, he's joined by top peers: pianist Herbie Hancock, bassist Cecil McBee, drummer Roy Haynes and, crucially, trumpeter Charles Tolliver in his first recording. (McLean is titular leader but splits compositional credits and spotlight with Tolliver.) Opening track Cancellation sets the template: beginning with an over-the-speed-limit head, McLean and Tolliver plunge into modal exploration with temporal fluctuations aided by Hancock elegantly travelling the keys with neo-classical flourishes. Eventually, the rhythm section joins them in melting the clock before returning with precise dispatch to the head. The rest of the album is similarly thrilling and experimental for its time – or any time.

Michael Simmons

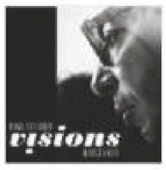
Mikael Tariverdiev

★★★

Visions In Black And White

EARTH RECORDINGS. LP

Proof the Russian composer was about more than just music for cinema.



Since 2015's first set dedicated to Russian composer Mikael Tariverdiev, Earth Recordings' focus has been on his scores for cinema; the run opened with a compilation, after which three albums were dedicated to individual films. *Visions In Black And White* takes a different tack by compiling 1960s and '70s work mostly in a jazz bag, much of it not recorded for soundtracks. Opener Playing Together is a quartet instrumental (double bass, drums, Tariverdiev's piano, sax) which swings like the clappers. The keyboard playing is clipped, tumbling – early '60s Greenwich Village transposed to Moscow. Prelude is a less conventional trio (no sax) outing with Tariverdiev's trademark Chopin-esque melancholy. Visions evinces Stravinsky dynamics, while In Search Of A Theme is a brittle and elegant solo reflection. *Visions In Black And White* is more a rounding-out of the picture than an entry point.

Kieron Tyler

TIME OUTTAKES
THE DAVE BRUBECK QUARTET

The Dave Brubeck Quartet

★★★★

Time OutTakes

BRUBECK EDITIONS. CD/DL

Unheard alternative version of jazz pianist's classic 1959 LP proves revelatory.

After being on the cover of Time magazine in 1954, Dave Brubeck was already a household name in America but five years later, his album *Time Out* transformed him into the unlikeliest of pop stars. Despite going on to sell a million, *Time Out* was a highly innovative exploration of polytonality and unusual time signatures. This previously unreleased set of outtakes from that iconic album illuminates Brubeck's compositional processes and allows us to hear many of the songs as works in progress. It's enthralling. Take Five, the centrepiece and hit single, is very different, here driven by a Latin-style groove. Included are two cuts not on the final album: the standard I'm In A Dancing Mood, defined by shifting metres, and a more informal blues, Watusi Jam.

Charles Waring

Getty

Chet Baker And Wolfgang Lackerschmid

★★★

Quartet Sessions 1979

DOT TIME. CD/DL/LP

US trumpeter's forgotten German sojourn resurfaces.

Baker was a month shy of his 50th birthday when he collaborated in the studio for the second time in the space of a year with German vibraphonist Lackerschmid. Their first encounter, recorded during early '79 in Stuttgart for the vibraphonist's Sandra label, yielded the duo album, *Ballads For Two*, highlighting their close musical rapport. Later in the year, the pair reconvened for this quintet session featuring guitarist Larry Coryell and a former Miles Davis protégé, drummer Tony Williams. The latter wrote the set's best cut, the swinging but meditative Mr Biko, a homage to the murdered South African anti-apartheid activist Steve Biko. Throughout the LP, Baker's horn glows with a mellow, understated beauty, and on Balzwaltz he also supplies woozy scat vocals. Though not an essential Baker recording, it's an engaging example of his best '70s work.

Charles Waring

Endless Boogie

★★★★

The Gathered And Scattered

NO QUARTER. DL/LP

Four-LP motherlode of the cratediggers' favourite underground rockers.

Crude Truth is the title of one monolithic groover on this suitably heavy-duty box set, an apt précis of Endless Boogie's super-reductive rock'n'roll aesthetic these past 20 years. *The Gathered And Scattered* compiles various CD-R rarities alongside plentiful unreleased tracks, mostly circa 2000-2010; fractionally more lo-fi but every bit as compelling as their orthodox albums. What the band call "Basement Jam Rituals" predominate: epically simmering, blues-infused and mostly instrumental workouts that privilege Paul Major and co's taste for a sort of gnarly, monster truck motorik, and their knack for finding the transcendental through relentless slog. Watch out, though, for high-energy attacks like Magic Square, roughly akin to AC/DC falling in with Detroit's Grande Ballroom crowd circa 1969. And beware the end of side six on the vinyl edition, where Fat Man Loop ∞ reveals itself to be a piano vamp stuck in a locked groove: endless boogie-woogie, no less.

John Mulvey

SUGAR MINOTT

Sugar Minott & The Black Roots Players

★★★★

Meet The People In A Lovers Dubbers Style

BLACK ROOTS. LP

Luscious dubs skirting the boundary of lovers rock and roots.

After recording at Studio One in Kingston and Wackies in New York, Sugar Minott hit London in 1980 to join the emerging lovers rock scene, recording songs of heartbreak over easy-going rhythms, with Jackie Mittoo as musical director. This authorised reissue of a lesser-known dub long-player, licensed from Minott's son, draws from lovers rock, roots reggae and proto-dancehall in equal measure, with lilting dubs of Sandy, Lonely Days and Lovers Rock seamlessly blending with bass-heavy cuts of Jah Jah Children and Babylon, and there's a tough DJ cut of Love Me Forever by Papa Honey too. With Scientist, John Wayne, and Minott himself at the mixing desk, these dubs rely on the strength of the rhythms, rather than gimmicks; for this edition, the dub mutation of Chic's I Want Your Love has been replaced by Minott's Penny For My Song.

David Katz

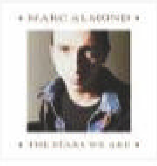
Marc Almond

★★★★

The Stars We Are

CHERRY RED. CD/LP

Expanded version of 1988's fourth solo LP, his moonshot for the mainstream.



Not even the chart-topping Something's Gotten Hold Of My Heart could prod *The Stars We Are* into the Top 40. In fact, the album was already out when Gene Pitney was recruited to duet, so early editions featured Almond's solo version. Over three decades later, the duet is in its rightful place and there's a slew of B-sides and 12-inch mixes, plus a DVD of promotional videos. Impeccably produced, lyrically edgy and drenched in melody, *The Stars We Are* offers no solution to the conundrum of why he was never fully embraced by the mainstream. Almond's only US chart showing, Tears Run Rings, oozes brooding menace; the impossibly catchy Bitter Sweet was an obvious Top 10 hit (naturally, it reached Number 40) and, on her final recording, Nico couldn't have been more Nico, threatening to "lead you to your funeral pyre" on Your Kisses Burn.

John Aizlewood

The Isley Brothers

★★★★

At Their Very Best

UNITED SOULS. LP

New label debuts with double albums from the Isleys and The O'Jays.

How to 'invent' new packages from catalogues already weighted with Greatest Hits, Best Ofs and Anthologies? United Souls' straightforward proposition – double albums, good vinyl pressing, gatefold sleeves featuring posters, magazine covers and promo shots, concise sleevenote – offers solid value. The Isleys' set features songs from their T-Neck era: from 1969's It's Your Thing to 1982's Between The Sheets by way of That Lady, Fight The Power, Summer Breeze, Harvest For The World and 12 more. The earthy James Brown/George Clinton-based funk, courtesy of Ernie and Marvin Isley and brother-in-law Chris Jasper, drives the older gospel-rooted harmonies of O'Kelly and Rudolph behind Ron Isley's unmatched leads that leap from delicate plea to testifying scream. Cover photo is from the back of 1976's *Harvest For The World*, which could confuse some browsers. Also out: *Philly Chartbusters* from The O'Jays' races from Love Train via Back Stabbers to Summer Fling, fine soul singing, again, this time boosted by the impeccable Sigma Sound house band.

Geoff Brown

THE ISLEY BROTHERS
AT THEIR VERY BEST

Various

★★★★

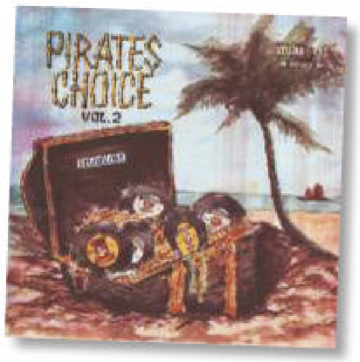
Pirates Choice Vol. 2

ROCKA SHACKA. CD/LP

Handpicked collection of ultra-rare Studio One roots.

Heralded as the birthplace of ska, renowned Jamaican recording facility Studio One was also home to exceptional roots reggae, so much so that Connect Records of Canada issued an unauthorised compilation in 1981, which Studio One subsequently reissued as *Pirates Choice*. This new compilation aims to emulate the excellence of that clandestine release and succeeds by delivering an exceptional tracklisting of extreme rarities. In fact, an original of opening song Born A Freeman by Freddie McGregor and Al Campbell reportedly sold for £2,000 recently. There is an alternate cut of Burning Spear's Door Peeper featuring Cedric Brooks's saxophone, Brooks's cut of Judah Eskander Tafari's Jah Light, an exclusive dubplate mix of McGregor's Homeward Bound, a Lennie Hibbert vibraphone piece called Chinese Beauty, and an unknown horns instrumental with fearsome soloing, rendering the set an exquisite collection of riveting roots.

David Katz



Their time is now: Vis-À-Vis get hip to the synth.

Vis-À-Vis

★★★★

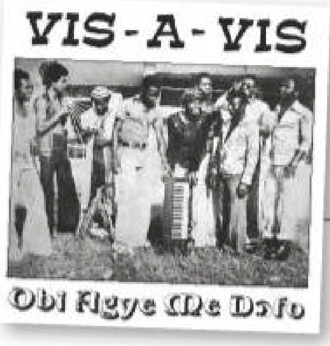
Obi Agye Me Dofo

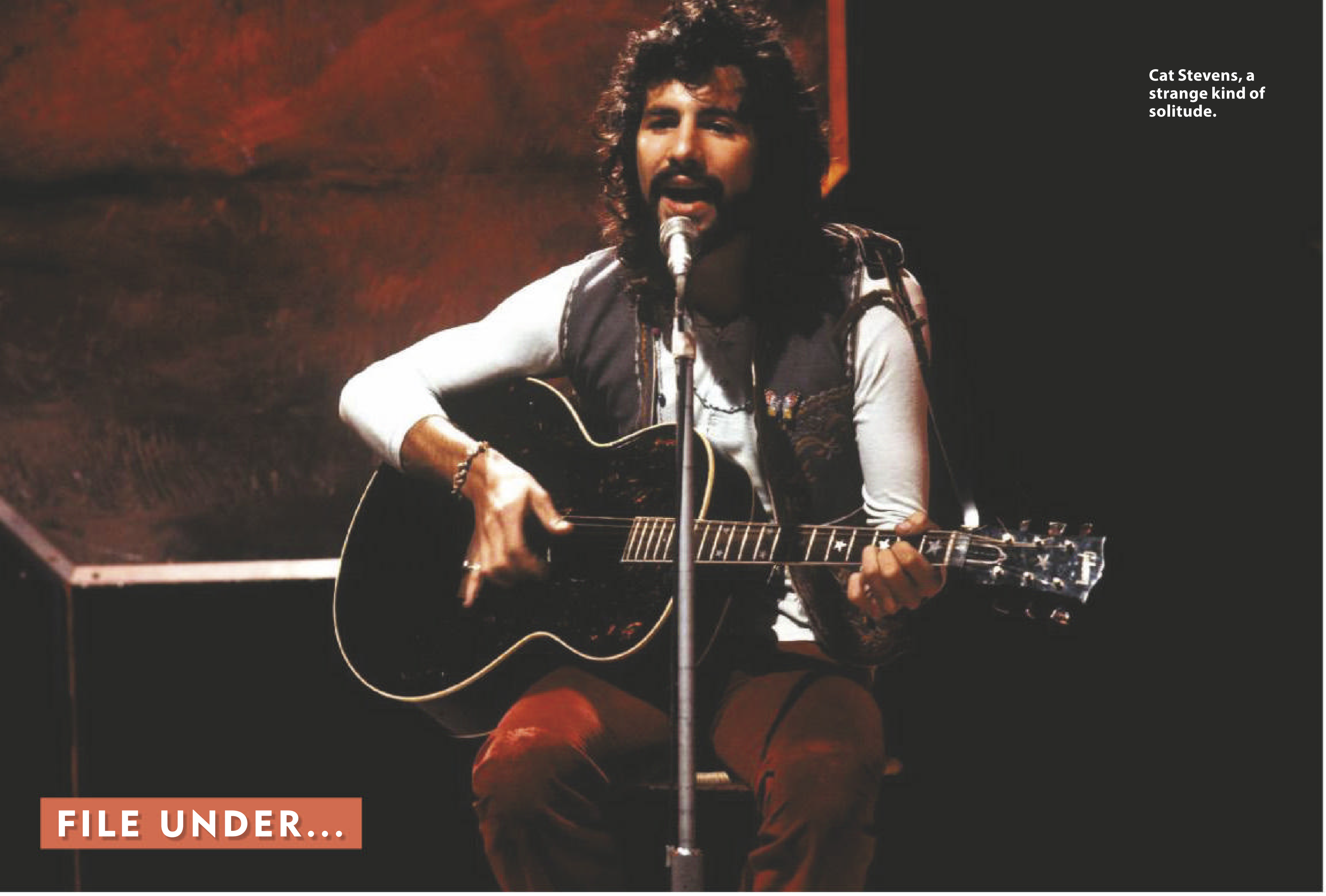
WE ARE BUSY BODIES. DL/LP

Ghanaian highlife stars get another day in the sun.

THOUGH THEIR name has been kept alive via various artists compilations, Ghana's Vis-À-Vis have never before been the recipients of a proper reissue programme. Active between 1975 and 1982 and releasing 13 albums, they really should be better known than they are. Their time is now, however, with 1976's *Odu Gu Ahorow* leading the re-releases; but it's 1977's *Obi Agye Me Dofo* that has become the connoisseur's choice over time, distinguished by what sounds like Tommy Doziz's first meeting with a synthesizer – on the sleeve, the whole band are pictured outdoors, gathered around the keyboard. It's an uninhibited rendezvous: the title track contains one solo after another – masterful Sammy Cropper on guitar, Paul Nobo on trumpet – while vocalists Anthony and Isaac 'Superstar' Yeboah are no slouches. Can't wait for their remaining 11 long-players to see the light of day.

David Hutcheon




Cat Stevens, a strange kind of solitude.

FILE UNDER...

Eight lives left

After a brush with death, a new improved Cat Stevens. By **Jim Irvin**.

MY APPRECIATION OF Cat Stevens has always been affected by two memories, both occasions which, for different reasons, made me shudder. First, as a small child in the late '60s, being riveted by the image, "a cup of cold coffee and a piece of cake" in his smash hit, Matthew And Son, and wondering whether that was a pleasant or revolting snack. The second was around the age of 13, at a school friend's house, witnessing his older sister, a usually reserved fan of classical music, go gooey while hearing *Teaser And The Firecat*. The Morning Has Broken Effect: the dark, dishy guy who sang hymns and approachable folk songs clearly gave her all the feels, as we didn't say then. From that point, and notwithstanding his subsequent retreat from the business, I considered Cat Stevens off to one side of pop, a singular figure with an ability to communicate with kids and an ever-present spiritual undercurrent, either because of that hymn, or the fact that someone was always murdering one of his hits during school assembly.

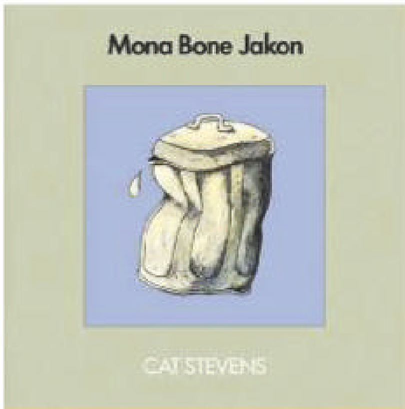
Somewhere between my two shudders came two defining albums, *Mona Bone Jakon* ★★★★ and *Tea For The Tillerman* ★★★★ both released in 1970 and thus celebrating their 50th anniversaries with expanded, deluxe 4-CD editions. After a busy year of pop glory with Deram in 1967, Stevens had suffered an enforced hiatus from the business, thanks to a life-threatening brush with tuberculosis, a long convalescence and a change of heart, during which he demoed about 40 songs. Signing with Island, who let him record them any way he wished, the brash pop star was reborn as a thoughtful bedsit laureate.

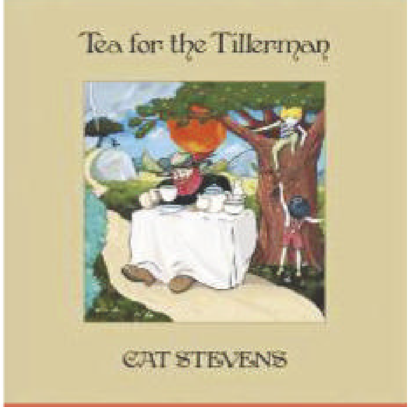
Mona Bone Jakon (released two weeks after *Elton John*) showed post-traumatic Stevens to be part of the emerging singer-songwriter set, on a spare collection, produced in conjunction with former Yardbird Paul Samwell-Smith, based around acoustic guitar, piano, multitracked voices, and light drums (with flute on one track, Katmandu, played by future star, Peter Gabriel). The opening song, Lady D'Arbanville, was an immediate, possibly unexpected, million seller and, when licensed to A&M, a US hit too. Pop Star lightly satirised his recent past. The vaguely prog I Think I See The Light felt akin to hot labelmates Jethro Tull. Stevens sounded vulnerable on Trouble, one of his most affecting songs, supposedly beloved of Elliott Smith and Chris Cornell. Whether the endorsement of two celebrity suicides is helpful isn't for me to say, but there it is. The song ends suddenly and unresolved, too.

Both these new editions include, alongside the original, a fresh 2020 remix, which will replace the original on new vinyl pressings. On *Mona Bone Jakon*, the difference is quite pronounced. Now sharper, more upfront, more three-dimensional, the remix makes the most of Stevens' engagingly fragile voice, indeed brings out a depth it didn't appear to possess at the time, giving the record a focus which more resembles his subsequent works.

Tea For The Tillerman, the one with Wild World and Father And Son on it, always sounded more rounded, so one could argue that the fuller presence of the voice is more distracting. But the benefits of the new mix are such that it shouldn't upset anyone who knows the original intimately. CD3 in each package features demos and outtakes, while CD4 collects contemporary live performances, some of them of poor, cassette-on-the-lap quality, some taken from high-grade TV and radio slots.

Markedly of their time, these records still thrum with the strange kind of solitude that attracted a huge fanbase half a century ago. Once recovered from those Proustian shudders on hearing him again, I enjoyed them a lot, but nostalgically; it's hard to imagine what modern ears might make of him.





"Brash pop star reborn as bedsit laureate."

Getty

Bill Evans

★★★★

Live At Ronnie Scott's

RESONANCE. CD/DL/LP

Mid-career mastery from a king of the keys.

The trio format suited jazz piano giant Bill Evans – his dense chord clusters and unique harmonic combinations filled up plenty of space. When he's the focus on the bandstand, his classical roots also move to the fore and show in the stately elegance of his phrasing. In this previously unreleased London club gig from 1968, he's accompanied by bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Jack DeJohnette. The material ranges from the Great American Songbook (George Gershwin, Jerome Kern), contemporary pop (André Previn, Burt Bacharach) and jazz peers (Miles Davis, Denny Zeitlin). Highlights include Thelonious Monk's 'Round Midnight, rendered more sprightly than its usual mournful tempo but without losing its deep blues roots. And Waltz For Debby, arguably Evans' finest original ballad, also swings a lot harder here than elsewhere, transforming into a rousing showcase for three crackerjack musicians.

Michael Simmons

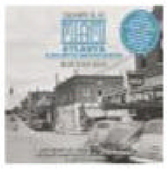
Various

★★★★

Down Home Blues: Miami, Atlanta And The South Eastern States – Blues In The Alley

WIENERWORLD. CD

An 83-track 3-CD cornucopia of '40s-'60s blues – obscure, oddball and outstanding.



The baggy title of the fifth in Wienerworld's excellent series embraces the wheezy one-man band Frank Edwards, downhome singer-guitarists Curley Weaver (with Blind Willie McTell) and John Lee (Baby Please Don't Go featuring an evocatively rustic pan-pipes player), early work by Ray Charles, Earl Hooker and Chick Willis, Jimmy Wilson venturing again (and again) down Tin Pan Alley, and long-beloved tracks like Jerry McCain's She's Tough and Steady, Danny Boy Thomas's Kokomo Me Baby and Eddie Hope's A Fool No More. These familiar landmarks punctuate a map of profoundly little-known figures such as John Bullard and Poor Jim, or the accomplished Tennessee pianist Richard Armstrong. Even the most attentive blueswatcher may never have spied some of these characters. Compiled by Chris Bentley and Peter Moody, it's accompanied by an informative and handsomely illustrated 78-page booklet.

Tony Russell

Fraternity

★★

Seasons Of Change – The Complete Recordings 1970-1974

CHERRY RED. CD/DL

Singer Bon Scott's pre-AC/DC group's story in a box.

Mainstays of the Adelaide pub circuit, Fraternity were tipped for great things after winning an annual music talent show and a free trip to London in 1971. Wider acclaim and hits eluded them, but this 3-CD collection shores up the legacy with two studio albums and a bonus disc of rarities. Fraternity's 1971 debut, *Livestock*, cartwheels between bluesy pop and lumpen rock. It's intriguing to hear Bon Scott playing a recorder on Raglan's Folly – but no more than that. The follow-up, *Flaming Galah*, is even more eclectic, meshing honking Canned Heat-style blues (Welfare Boogie, Annabelle) with ambitious, quasi-biblical prog (You Have A God), while Mick Jurd's guitar howls and honks at random intervals. Scott's voice had yet to acquire its paint-stripping timbre, although it's getting there. But only AC/DC completists will need this collection in their lives.

Mark Blake

Various

★★★

Southend Punk Volume One

ANGELS IN EXILE. CD

The surprisingly enjoyable sound of the Thames Delta's punk movement.

Southend Punk Volume One contains shouting, Stooges riffs, Essex vowels, awkwardly taped drums and a surfeit of charm. It is like The Rough Guide To New Wave You've Never Heard. Of the 14 tracks recorded between 1978 and '86, the most well-known voice is that of Alison Moyet's, here as vocalist of The Vicars, giving it full Siouxsie on Radio Roy. The Steve Hooker Band's How Did You Know? is a perfect example of his 'New York punk and British beat' combination. You can hear the (Southend-on?) sea-change in the early '80s where everyone goes from sounding like the Pistols to Joy Division. The detailed booklet is fascinating, too. Every provincial town had their own versions of the clubs mentioned; Scamps, Crocs, Focus and the Esplanade. *Southend Punk Volume One* stands as testament to all those bands who, emboldened by the era's DIY ethic, had their go.

Daryl Easlea

Various

★★★★

Directions In Music 1969-1972: Miles Davis, His Musicians, And The Birth Of A New Age Of Jazz

ACE/BGP. CD/DL/LP

When Miles Davis shook up the jazz world.

Miles Davis didn't invent jazz-rock (vibraphonist Gary Burton got there a couple of years before him) but he legitimised it with his landmark albums *In A Silent Way* and *Bitches Brew*, both recorded in 1969. Tired of bebop structures and influenced by both the musical taste and fashion sense of his new young wife, Betty, Davis completely reinvented himself. This tastefully assembled compilation presents key tracks by the trumpeter and several of his young cohorts (including Herbie Hancock, Joe Zawinul, Keith Jarrett and Chick Corea) during a fertile four-year period when they were all crashing through musical boundaries with a synthesis of jazz, rock, and funk that the critics dubbed 'fusion'. Ranging from ethereal soundscapes (Wayne Shorter's Sweet Pea) to searing avant-funk (Miles's Directions), this stupendous retrospective brings an exciting era in music history vividly back to life.

Charles Waring

The great Bill Evans, turning sprightly round midnight.

The Ibrahim Khalil Shihab Quintet Featuring Mankunku

★★★★

Spring

MATSULI MUSIC. LP

Ill-fated 1968 South African jazz album's belated return to vinyl.

Given just two hours of valuable studio time, with no second takes, the stakes were high when *Spring* was committed to tape. The self-taught Shihab's swinging first outing as leader found the preciously talented pianist drawing the best from tenor saxophonist Winston 'Mankunku' Ngozi, whose innate grasp of metre and time makes the searing 12-minute title track sing like sunshine in the rain. Both excel again above the bluesy bass drone of The Birds, Mankunku's unmistakably emotive voice (think *A Love Supreme*-era John Coltrane) and Shihab's intricately twisty solos stretching structure to extremes. First issued perilously close to Mankunku's revelatory Cape jazz masterpiece *Yakhal' Inkomo* and out of print since an EMI factory fire destroyed its original masters, *Spring* fully deserves its own place in the sun.

Andy Cowan

VINYL PACKAGE OF THE MONTH

Buzzcocks

★★★★★

Complete United Artists Singles 1977-1980

DOMINO

AMONG the preponderance of box sets landing this Christmas, here's an immaculate conception: Buzzcocks' initial run of 12 7-inch singles, re-pressed with original artwork, and newly collected in a sleek flip-top packet. The first eight were, of course, definitively anthologised on 1981's *Singles Going Steady* – a staple in the record collections of pop-friendly punks of all ages. There, the A-sides were bunched on side one, with the B's relegated to the less-aired flip. With their thrilling Pete Shelley-penned choruses, zingy production and running time rarely exceeding three minutes, however, these immortal hits were literally made for 45rpm consumption. It's an untouchable joy to plonk down your needle for, say, Orgasm Addict's 122-second mania, and also rediscover back-up attractions such as Steve Diggle's Autonomy, as well as the little-heard final three waxings (all of which flopped). This inspirational package could single-handedly kickstart a revival for the 7-inch format.

Andrew Perry

©Francois Jacquenod for GM Press

Bonobo

★★★★

Black Sands

NINJA TUNE. LP

Brighton multi-tasker revamps own fourth album, 10 years after.

From Slipknot to These New Puritans, the 10th anniversary reissue album remains a thing. Peripatetic Brighton-raised, LA-lured Bonobo AKA one-man chillout orchestra Simon Green has also been at the nostalgia fountain. His 2010 fourth LP *Black Sands* proved a musical and commercial pivot, expanding his skillset from late-night downtempo to a more elemental world music. Behind the new Lake District cover image, red vinyl and "offset printed paper inners", it hasn't aged a bit. The Japanese-sounding Prelude still hints at Studio Ghibli; Kiara gives it full electro-hiccup; and if you want more cowbell from a sonic architect drawn to live samples, try flute-enhanced standout Kong or El Toro's mariachi-meets-Krupa-paradiddles. The honeyed tones of Andreya Triana enhance on Afrobeat workout We Could Forever. *Black Sands* inadvertently led Green to Grammy nominations and EMAs; a decade on, it still sounds like yesterday. Easy to love, difficult to imitate.

Andrew Collins

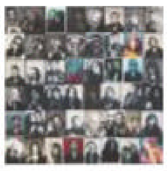
The Kills

★★★★

Little Bastards

DOMINO. CD/DL/LP

Grab bag of '00s offcuts: their answer to the JAMC's *Barbed Wire Kisses*.



The Anglo-American duo Jamie Hince and Alison Mosshart spent much of their inaugural decade fleeing from White Stripes comparisons, despite a sonic experimentalism anchored around a distinctly un-Stripesian beatbox, which the pair privately christened Little Bastard. Hence the title of this high-quality odds-'n'-sods comp from around their first three records, which makes a good case for the often undervalued breadth and valour of their ambitions. There are more scrubbed-up 2009 outtake/B-side co-productions with hip-hop-brained Armani XXXChange like Superpowerless and London Hates You. But earlier lo-fi self-creations reveal beat excursions into Cabaret Voltaire clank (Passion Is Accurate) and third-Velvets-album simmer (Baby's Eyes) alike. Among a handful of covers, Screamin' Jay Hawkins' I Put A Spell On You is dispensed with all the jittery tension of Can's Mushroom, while Dock Boggs' Appalachian country oddity Sugar Baby morphs into a Spacemen 3 galactic feedback jam. In all, an unexpected and all-encompassing feast.

Andrew Perry

Tangerine Dream

★★★

Pilots Of Purple Twilight – The Virgin Recordings 1980-1983

UMC/EMI. CD/DL

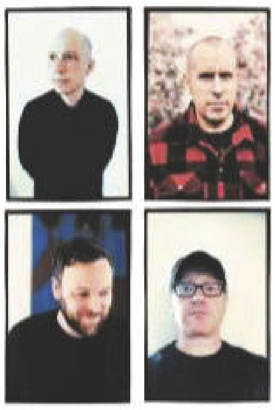
Ten-CD box of remastered and remixed – and some unheard – material.

From 1980's *Tangram*, Tangerine Dream were an electronic trio in transition, from the essentially improvised, avowedly kosmische music of the previous decade towards structured pieces with clean, gleaming sonics that heralded techno. It was enough of a change to lose some fans while attracting others. But there is much to enjoy in this period before mainstay Chris Franke quit in 1986, citing a decline in quality. The full two-hour Dominion Theatre concert from 1982, which spawned the live album *Logos*, shows that they were shedding both the longueurs of the '70s, and their intricate relationship between rhythm, texture and shifting harmonics. It was now more melodically immediate but a tad glossy and cheesy at times. The two albums officially released here for the first time, movie soundtracks to The Keep and The Soldier, are particularly compelling in their wide-ranging rhythmic excursions and mood pieces.

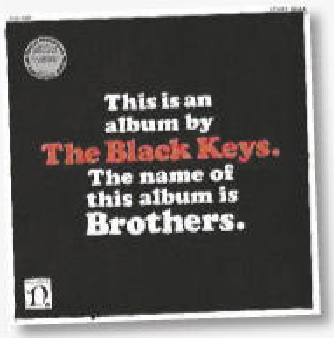
Mike Barnes

COMING NEXT MONTH...

Foo Fighters, Jimi Hendrix, The Weather Station, Mogwai (below), Goat Girl, The Hold Steady, Steve Earle, Serge Gainsbourg, Bessie Smith, Ma Rainey and more.



REISSUES EXTRA


This is an album by The Black Keys. The name of this album is Brothers.

The Black Keys

★★★★

Brothers

NONESUCH. CD/LP

Remastered vinyl of Ohio duo's breakthrough, with photo essay of the vintage gear they took to Muscle Shoals in 2009. Three unreleased tracks stoke the voodoo with Funkadelic-reverb (Keep My Name Outta Your Mouth), and stomp (Chop And Change, from the Twilight Saga OST). *JB*

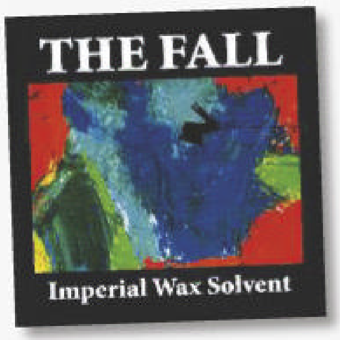
Chavez

★★★

Gone Glimmering

MATADOR. LP

Twenty-fifth anniversary edition of the debut by undersung, Matt Sweeney-led New Yorkers. Its instrumental wanderings and guitar dynamics took a fresh look at Slint's epochal rock formula (perfected a year later on *Ride The Fader*). Expanded to 2-LPs by four-song Pentagram Ring EP. *JB*



The Fall

★★★★

Imperial Wax Solvent

CHERRY RED. CD/LP

From 2008, MES hits 50 and scrambles the frequencies with a cranked up new penal unit, with war documentaries, Steve Albini and weapon dogs caught in the bomb-blast. Adds an alternative mix and a live disc. As necessary as air to those who know. *IH*

GIUDA
RACEY ROLLER

Giuda

★★★★

Racey Roller: The Early Years

FUNGO. 3x7-INCH

A decade after the Rome terrace-glam firm's debut *Racey Roller* lobbed toilet rolls onto the pitch of rock'n'roll, a mini-album of its demos over three singles, with a Tony Crazeekid-designed booklet, 'Giuda Horde' membership card and aluminium 45 adaptor. Crunchy! *IH*

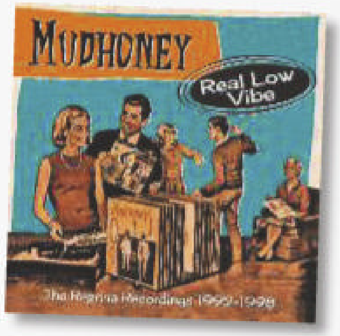
Lee Fields & The Expressions

★★★

Big Crown Vaults Vol. 1

BIG CROWN. CD/DL/LP

It's no fault of soul man Lee Fields' performances that these seven songs/five instrumental versions, recorded for 2017-19 albums, were set aside. Strong opener Two Timer, pacey floorfiller Thinking About You and ballad Don't Give Up are the highlights. *GB*



Mudhoney

★★★★

Real Low Vibe

CHERRY RED. CD

The Seattle garage rock legends' Reprise era boxed on 4-CDs: from peak grunge ennui (*Piece Of Cake*) to caustic *My Brother The Cow* and 1998's balefully magnificent *Tomorrow Hit Today*, produced in Memphis by Jim Dickinson. Amid many superfuzzy rarities, a 1993 promo recording of a gig shut down by the Seattle cops' archaic Teen Dance Ordinance. *KC*

FLAUNT IT
SPUTNIK

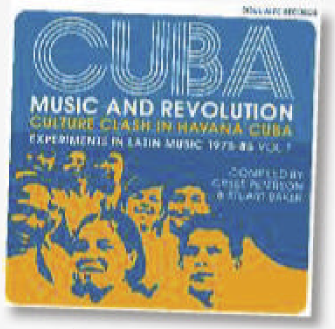
Sigue Sigue Sputnik

★★★

Flaunt It!

CHERRY RED. CD

Despised for their 'Fleece The World' scamming in '86, this Moroder-produced Suicide/glam/A Clockwork Orange techno-rockabilly about rockets and sex is more fun than posterity has it. Over four CDs, remixes, rarities and a live show back-comb the fluorescent troll-wig. *IH*


CUBA
MUSIC AND REVOLUTION
CULTURE CLASH IN HAVANA CUBA
EXPERIMENTS IN LATIN MUSIC 1975-85 VOL 1
COMPILED BY GILLES PETERSON & STUART BAKER

Various

★★★★

Cuba: Music And Revolution

SOUL JAZZ. CD/LP/DL

Typically Soul Jazz: revelatory cratedigging; well presented with helpful subtitles like *Experiments In Latin Music 1975-85*. Of 23 jams rarely heard outside Cuba or the Soviet bloc, Pablo Milanés (a take on Tropicália) and Afro-Cuban jazz piano maestro Emiliano Salvador the picks. *JM*

Various

★★★

SEX: Too Fast To Live

STRANGER THAN PARADISE. LP

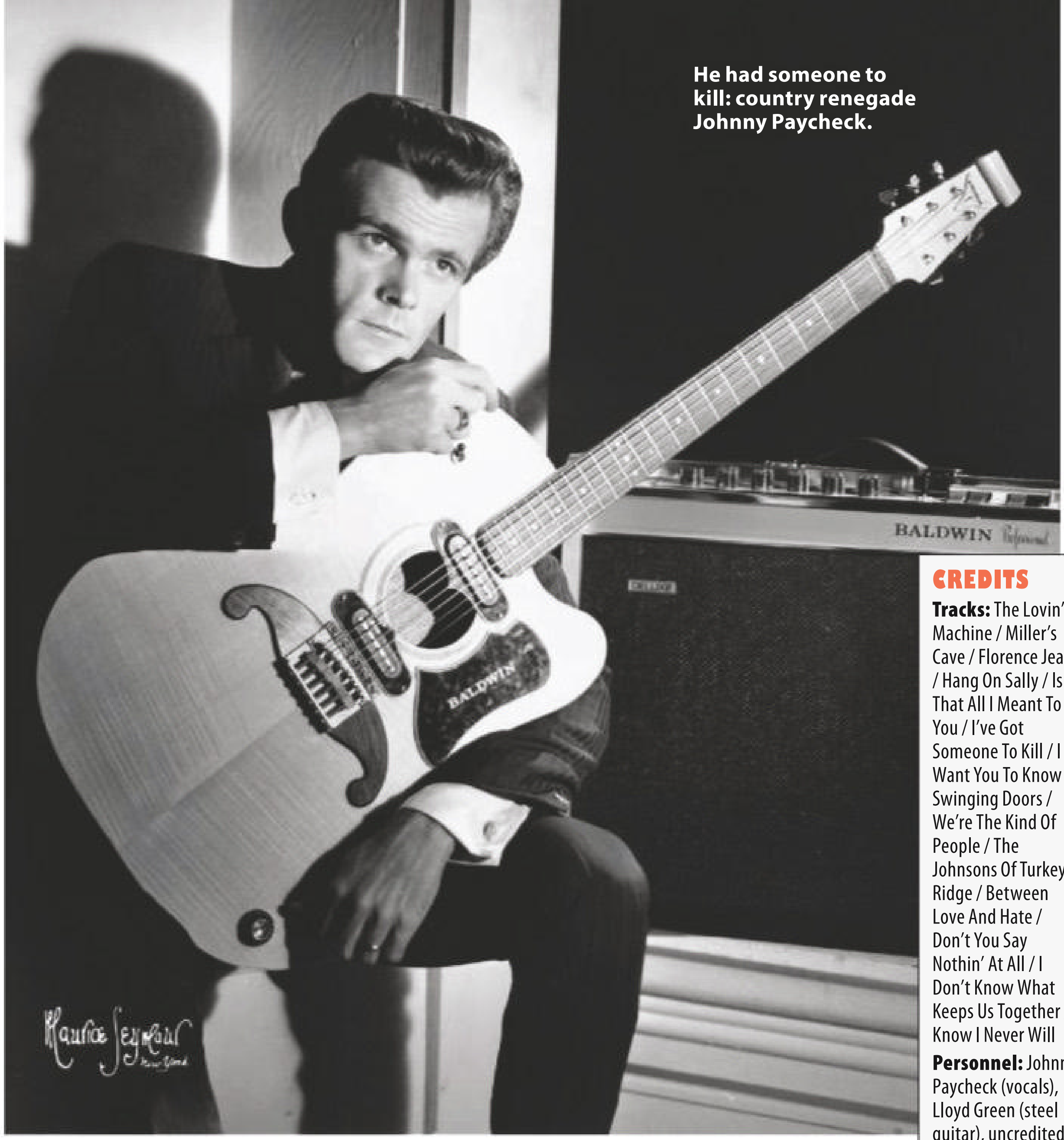
First time on vinyl plundering of the jukebox at Westwood and McLaren's Kings Road boutique. Fashion your own atmosphere of cool insurrection via The Creation, Vince Taylor, The Moontrekkers or Loretta Lynn's punker-spirited The Pill. Notes include Don Letts, Jordan, Jon Savage, Paul Cook and more. *JB*

RATINGS & FORMATS

Your guide to the month's best music is now even more definitive with our handy format guide.

CD COMPACT DISC DL DOWNLOAD ST STREAMING LP VINYL
MC CASSETTE DVD DIGITAL VIDEO DISC C IN CINEMAS BR BLU-RAY

★★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★	★	☆
MOJO CLASSIC	EXCELLENT	GOOD	DISAPPOINTING	BEST AVOIDED	DEPLORABLE



He had someone to kill: country renegade Johnny Paycheck.

Love And Death

This month's de-dusted vintage bottle; a hardcore country maverick sings songs of cars, love and murder.

Johnny Paycheck

The Lovin' Machine

LITTLE DARLIN', 1966

CREDITS

Tracks: The Lovin' Machine / Miller's Cave / Florence Jean / Hang On Sally / Is That All I Meant To You / I've Got Someone To Kill / I Want You To Know / Swinging Doors / We're The Kind Of People / The Johnsons Of Turkey Ridge / Between Love And Hate / Don't You Say Nothin' At All / I Don't Know What Keeps Us Together / I Know I Never Will

Personnel: Johnny Paycheck (vocals), Lloyd Green (steel guitar), uncredited musicians

Producer: Aubrey Mayhew. Bob Simpson, Al Pachucki (engineers)

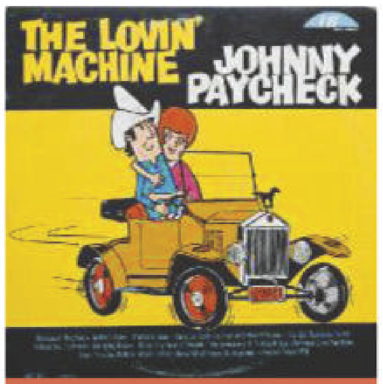
Released: July 1966

Recorded: RCA Victor studios, Nashville, New York

Current availability: second-hand

THE WIDER LISTENING world knows Johnny Paycheck for his bird-flipping cover of David Allan Coe's Take This Job And Shove It, a US country Number 1 in January 1978. But the singer born Donald E. Lytle in Greenfield, Ohio in May 1938 was by then already a 20-year veteran of the honky tonks, and a man who trouble loved.

He had started as he meant to go on. A drop out and drifter who served two years in the brig for punching his commanding officer when serving in the navy, in 1958 he washed up in Nashville. Over the next few years he recorded singles for Decca as Donny Young, and played bass and sang back-up in the bands of Porter Wagoner, Faron Young and Ray Price. He toured with George Jones's Jones Boys from 1962 to '66, on bass and steel guitar, singing harmony on songs including the 1965 hit Love Bug, and giving that soon-to-be-familiar stare of on-edge bonhomie on the sleeve of *New Country Hits*.



> **"I like to sing about the heart, hurt and pain and everything in between."**
> JOHNNY PAYCHECK

In 1965 he was introduced to Pickwick Records executive Aubrey Mayhew, also a noted collector of John F Kennedy memorabilia, allegedly while lying intoxicated under a bridge in Nashville. Soon after, Donald Lytle took the name Johnny Paycheck, from Chicago heavyweight boxer John J Pacek, who fought Joe Louis in 1940. After Paycheck's first solo single A-11, a jukebox weepie convincingly sung in his strong tenor, the two founded the Little Darlin' label in 1966.

Released in July that same year, a few months after his recorded-in-the-studio debut *Live At Carnegie Hall*, *The Lovin' Machine* was an upfront, bang-to-rights country album whose twists and tributaries continue to perplex. As unthreatening as the album's goofy Model T cover cartoon, songs including the open-road title track, moonshine thriller Fountain Of Love and adulterous lament Florence Jean would have fit easily on mainstream C&W radio. Familiar tropes they may be, but they're handled masterfully, as on the Paycheck/Mayhew composition We're The Kind Of People: with Lloyd Green's pedal steel alive to the sentiment of the song, crying for all it's worth as it revisits the maudlin world of A-11, evoking a dimly-lit joint full of heartbroken barflies finding succour in sweet wine and songs just like this.

"When I was doing the arrangements with the Little Darlin' songs," Paycheck said in 1998, "I could take those three or four chord songs and see what I could do... I don't write many songs about trucks or trees because I like to sing about the heart, hurt and pain and everything in between."

Elsewhere, and often without warning, we're in more primal, psychologically fraught territory. A cover of Cowboy Jack Clement's Miller's Cave depicts the murderous bravado and ultimate impotence of the rejected man no one took seriously ("then they laughed at me, so I shot 'em"). Written by Paycheck and Mayhew, patricidal shuffle The Johnsons Of Turkey Ridge depicts an inter-clan blood feud in Kentucky. Yet these pale beside I've Got Someone To Kill, one of the most chilling country songs of them all.

To a canter-like beat and distracted steel, there's an old-fashioned courtesy to this song of premeditated murder, told almost apologetically during a chance encounter in a bar. Like the protagonists in a thousand songs from You'd Better Move On to Jolene, the narrator fears their one chance at happiness is being taken from them, yet here he's prepared to take the ultimate step in self-annihilation, shrugging, "I know I'll surely die for what I'm about to do, but it doesn't matter, I'm a dead man anyhow." The listener may realise, in a cold sweat, how reasonable this killer sounds: the "someone" he has to kill is also himself. To the Country Music Foundation's Daniel Cooper, its singer would later muse on this brief, horrific glimpse into psychopathology, "That was in the old days, and people said, 'Geeeah! What a song!'"

With the title song reaching Number 8 on the country listings, Paycheck enjoyed further chart entries that decade with *Jukebox Charlie (And Other Songs That Make The Jukebox Play)* and *Country Soul*, though by the end of the decade Little Darlin' had folded and the bottle beckoned, as did a period of homelessness. The revival of his fortunes in the '70s as a country outlaw was punctuated by bankruptcy and yet more drinking. A YouTube-able, high-speed 1981 date at New York's Lone Star Café suggests a taste for strong powders and hints that the lessons of 1979's (Stay Away From The) Cocaine Train were not being heeded. Paycheck would end the '80s in the Chillicothe Correctional Institute after a Christmas 1985 incident at the North High Lounge in Hillsboro, Ohio. Paycheck shot bar patron Larry Wise with his .22 handgun, grazing his skull and blowing his hat off, apparently after Wise had insulted the singer by offering him a meal of turtle soup and deer. Merle Haggard came to play a show with him in the jail, saying he hoped Paycheck would in future, "stay off that dope."

He was pardoned by Ohio governor Richard Celeste in January 1991 and was, he said, 10 years clean when he was inducted into the Grand Ole Opry in 1997. "No matter what I do," he said before his death in 2003, "the fans don't really care."

Ian Harrison

Getty

Singer, songwriter, guitarist Bobby Womack, he can understand it.

Bobby Womack

A preacher and a poet. By **Geoff Brown.**

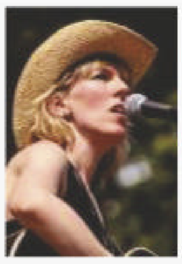
IT WAS A SOUL man's life from beginning to end, rammed full of incidents that would find a home in one of the many classic songs he'd write. Take, for instance, the episode with which Bobby Womack opened his ghosted autobiography, Midnight Mover. His wife, Barbara, catches him in bed with her daughter from an earlier marriage, Linda, the child of Womack's great mentor Sam Cooke. She shoots him and he hot foots it out of the house, barely escaping with his life let alone his trousers. I'm A Midnight Mover, indeed. And Womack had the gospel-raised voice – a mix of muscle, gravel and grit in a honey-rich tone – to breathe vivid life into this and everything else he sang.

One of five brothers, Bobby was born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1944 and was part of The Womack Brothers, gospel singers who soon came under the influence of Cooke, first recording sanctified sounds and then, as The Valentinos, R&B and soul, a switch to the secular that caused a great rift with their devout father, Friendly Sr.

Womack's writing for his groups included Lookin' For A Love, later a hit for the J Geils Band, and It's All Over Now, famously covered by The Rolling Stones. "I wasn't happy about it," he told me, "I had a bad vibe about it… until I saw the royalty cheque." Songwriting and session guitar work would sustain Womack through some fallow times. First, Cooke was shot dead in December 1964 and his distraught young wife asked Womack, who was even younger, to look after her. They quickly married, outraging both gospel and soul fraternities. Work dried up, he split The Valentinos and took what session jobs he could. Ray Charles hired him as a guitarist, he worked closely with Wilson Pickett, and by the end of the '60s was recording under his own name again and working with friends Sly Stone and Janis Joplin on their key recordings.

Disco, drugs and lazy material derailed his career towards the end of the '70s, but he continued to be a valued collaborator – right to the end, as Damon Albarn/Jamie Hewlett's virtual band Gorillaz invited him to their *Plastic Beach* album and tour.

> "I had a bad vibe about it… until I saw the royalty cheque."



CAST YOUR VOTES…

This month you chose your Top 10 Bobby Womack LPs. Next month we want your Lucinda Williams Top 10. Send selections via Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or e-mail to mojo@bauermedia.co.uk with the subject 'How To Buy Lucinda Williams' and we'll print the best comments.

10 Wilton Felder

Inherit The Wind

MCA 1980, £15

You say: "*Inherit The Wind*, because it's so soulful" Phillippe Dewitte, via Facebook

How to distil Womack's work as collaborator and sideman, from his gospel start to fade with Gorillaz? This writer first interviewed him in 1975 while he was co-producing Ron Wood's second solo album, *Now Look*. Despite all his studio work as a guitarist, his profile actually grew as his solo career waned in the late '70s and guest vocalist appearances grew. The most visible? Two LPs with The Crusaders' Wilton Felder, this being the first. Not vocally stretched by the title track, it became his highest UK chart entry, albeit a shared one, until another duet, 1993's I'm Back For More, with Lulu, reached Number 27. Far better than that, however, are his duets with Patti Labelle and Alltrinna Grayson.

4 Bobby Womack

The Bravest Man In The Universe

XL 2012, £5

You say: "The underrated final album" Jon Packer, via Twitter

Womack had lost confidence in the early 2000s but by 2010 he was back, working with Damon Albarn and Gorillaz on that year's *Plastic Beach*, singing on first single, Stylo. XL label's Richard Russell offered BW a deal for what would be his last album, and gave co-writing and co-production help along with Albarn, setting the soul man at ease amid electronic beats and synths. *Bravest Man* goes back to Womack's start. Not as overtly gospel as the brothers' group, yet much of the material here is as spiritual as can be – the traditional Deep River and Jubilee (Don't Let Nobody Turn You Around) – while Stupid rips into TV preachers. A fine valediction.

Eyebine., Getty

THE VALENTINOS
LOOKIN' FOR A LOVE
SAR

9 The Valentinos
Lookin' For A Love

ABKCO 2014, £5.49

You say: "He laid strong gospel and R&B foundations, the singing and writing so promising." Jack Eyre, via e-mail

Collecting *The Complete SAR Recordings* of both The Womack Brothers (Friendly Jr, Curtis, Harry, Cecil and Bobby) and their secular iteration The Valentinos. Bobby met mentor Sam Cooke in the early '50s. By the time they reconnected in '61, Cooke had his own label, SAR, and Womack was evolving as a writer, as heard on The Womack Brothers' confident Yield Not To Temptation (sung by Curtis) and Couldn't Hear Nobody Pray. A year later they were The Valentinos and Bobby is firmly in charge, singing lead on Lookin' For A Love (his Couldn't Hear Nobody Pray rewritten by JW Alexander & Zelda Samuels) and in 1964 his original It's All Over Now, which gave The Rolling Stones a first UK Number 1 and first US hit.

8 Bobby Womack
Safety Zone

UNITED ARTISTS 1975, £6.99

You say: "Despite the glossy production, Bobby's vocal on Trust In Me is one of his best." Jean French, via e-mail

After a productive 1973 in Memphis, Womack had moved his recording operations to California and in 1975 released two LPs, *I Don't Know What The World Is Coming To* and this superior set. Standouts: Love Just Ain't Something That You Get For Free, another slice-of-love song written from his own life, and Daylight. His work on the Across 110th Street movie guides the well-orchestrated Everything's Gonna Be Alright and makes good use of Wah Wah Watson's guitar and gizmos; Where There's A Will There's A Way's arrangement is also full to the brim. I Feel A Groove Comin' On filled dancefloors without being overtly disco, a Herbie Hancock piano solo interrupting the wah wah and synths.

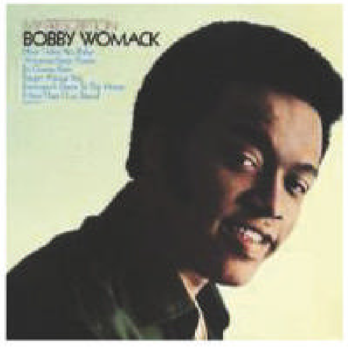
BOBBY WOMACK

7 Bobby Womack
The Womack "Live"

LIBERTY 1970, £20

You say: "For the frantic version of More Than I Can Stand." Danny Toeman, via Twitter

Amid 'live' hubbub, Womack thrives. His easy conversational interaction with the audience, unexpected covers (Fred Neil's Everybody's Talkin'; George Harrison's Something), loose charts and, on his medley of Sam Cooke's Laughin' & Clownin' and Percy Mayfield's To Live The Past, the latter guesting. I'm A Midnight Mover is reclaimed from Wilson Pickett with a briskly hard-hitting arrangement before the set's centrepiece – Womack as wise and wisecracking raconteur, living up to his nickname of The Preacher. In pulpit cadences, he tells of returning home early from work to find his best friend's car in the drive, his front door locked, hearing carnal sounds from inside the house. Segues into More Than I Can Stand.



6 Bobby Womack
My Prescription

MINIT 1970, £20

You say: "This gets my vote for the version of More Than I Can Stand." Kenneth Boss, via Facebook

Womack had spent much of the '60s as a session guitarist and songwriter, but eventually landed a solo recording deal at Minit with producer Chips Moman at American Studios in Memphis. Unfortunately, Wilson Pickett had cherry-picked the best material in Womack's songbook (I'm In Love, Jealous Love, I've Come A Long Way), so 1968's *Fly Me To The Moon* was heavily weighted with covers, but by 1970 he'd written More Than I Can Stand and How I Miss You Baby and the wheels were turning again. Moreover, the covers on his first LP had proved so effective that he now took on I Left My Heart In San Francisco and Jonathan King's Everyone's Gone To The Moon with very winning results.

ORIGINAL MOTION PICTURE SCORE
ACROSS
110TH STREET
BOBBY WOMACK
J.J. JOHNSON

5 Bobby Womack
Across 110th Street

UNITED ARTISTS 1972, £12

You say: " Essential blaxploitation soundtrack… worth it for the title track alone." Mick Mickerson, via Twitter

In the '70s, movie soundtracks offered soul stars fresh creative challenges and opened new commercial avenues. Films like Shaft, Superfly and Trouble Man had to work hard to match their excellent soundtracks. Though JJ Johnson composed the incidental music for this 1972 heist movie, Womack's five songs remain memorable, notably the title track's gritty picture of ghetto life – "pushers won't let the junkie go free"; "pimps trying to catch a woman that's weak" – set against a typically catchy BW melody. Tarantino borrowed it for Jackie Brown. (If You Don't Want My Love) Give It Back off *Communication* is repurposed as a looser, more reflective piece; Do It Right transports Hendrix to a funkier place.

Bobby Womack

3 Bobby Womack
Lookin' For A Love Again

UNITED ARTISTS 1974, £20

You say: "Pure genius country, blues and soul." Sandra Wright, via Facebook

After his soundtrack (see 5), Womack hit a purple patch in 1973 on two releases, this set and *Facts Of Life*, with its classic of weary heartbreak, I'm Through Trying To Prove My Love To You. However, *Lookin' For A Love Again* is the more cohesive LP. The Valentinos' signature hit is revisited at the start – it's aged wonderfully – and another great ballad of heartache, I Don't Wanna Be Hurt By Ya Love Again, is also a highlight. Doing It My Way's relaxed autobiography is right in the moment, while You're Welcome To Stop On By hits a gliding groove. Let It Hang Out sets the prime of Muscle Shoals on that driving beat; Copper Kettle is AF Beddoe's folk song about moonshine whiskey.

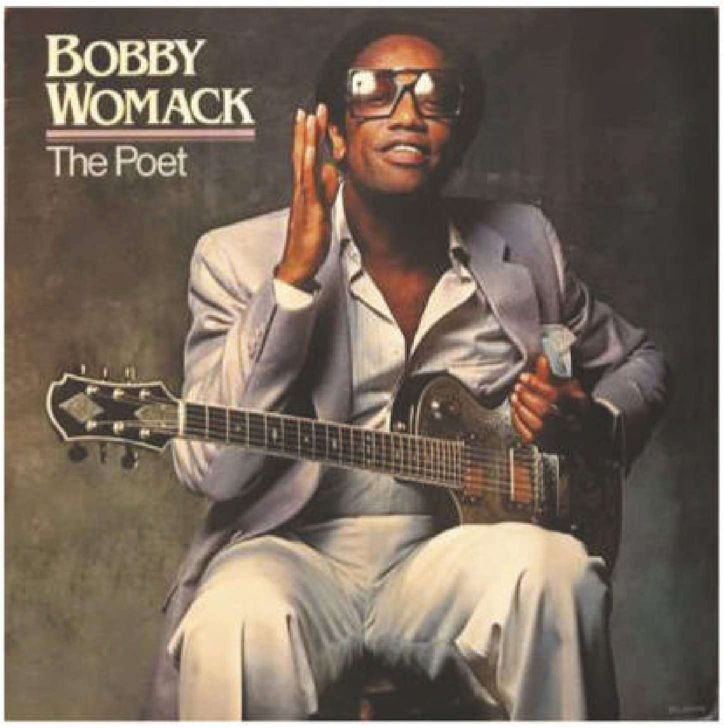
BOBBY WOMACK

2 Bobby Womack
Understanding/ Communication

UNITED ARTISTS 1971/1972, ID, £11

You say: "Where the template of funky to folky was set." Cody Lee, via Facebook

Bit of cheating here. These LPs were recorded in one early '70s two-week blitz at Muscle Shoals and much later, in 2004, reissued as this CD twofer. Womack had played many sessions in the South as a guitarist and they were accustomed to his methods. Released first, *Communication* revisits gospel (Yield Not To Temptation), has Close To You preceded by a heartfelt monologue, and That's The Way I Feel About Cha. *Understanding* boasts the classic I Can Understand It plus Woman's Gotta Have It (Linda Cooke a co-writer), and covers of The Beatles' And I Love Her, and Neil Diamond's sun-dappled Sweet Caroline. He offers the definitive version of Jim Ford's wistful Harry Hippie, too.



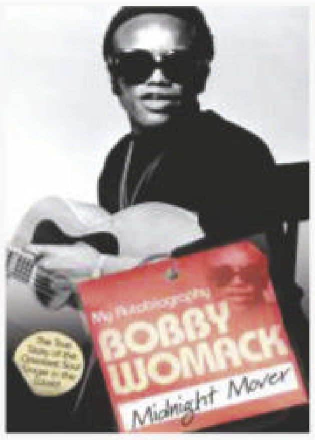
Bobby Womack The Poet

BEVERLY GLEN 1981, £6

You say: "The production has just the right amount of slick '80s electro funk." Will And Can Songs, via Twitter

Tempered in the fire of tragedy – baby son a victim of cot death; brother Harry stabbed to death by wife – without a deal and with finances ruined by his drug intake, *The Poet* achieved one of the great comebacks, only lightly signposted by his work with Wilton Felder (see 10). Recorded for Beverly Glen, *The Poet, The Poet II* and *Someday We'll All Be Free* formed a smoothly produced '80s soul trilogy, with Womack's rough-edged, treacle-rich voice in great shape and fully engaged here on part one. Eight strong melodies, most of them at mid- or uptempo, but the album's late-arriving standout is a co-written ballad, If You Think You're Lonely Now. Decorated with a typically ear-catching guitar, Womack's soul-gospel delivery sermonises, wrenchingly, about the cost of losing love. Earlier highlight Just My Imagination is not The Temptations' classic but a song by brother Cecil, who'd soon enjoy success in Womack & Womack with wife Linda, Sam Cooke's daughter.

NOW DIG THIS



First published in 2006, Midnight Mover: My Autobiography, written with Robert Ashton, tells Womack's story in a readable flow and doesn't lack a good anecdote about Sam Cooke, Ray Charles, Sly Stone and others whose paths the singer crossed; updated on his death in 2014. On DVD, there's a 90-minute 2003 In Concert set from BET recorded in Washington DC, while a London-recorded live set appeared as *Soul Seduction Supreme* and *Soul Sensation Live*, both first as CDs in 1991 and 1998 respectively, then also popping up on DVD. Everything is from later in his career. Listen instead to *Everything's Gonna Be Alright: The American Singles 1967-76* (Charly), 2-CDs illustrating the wide variety of material, self-penned and covers, mastered by Womack.

Wise man: Ken Hensley, who hit the heights with Heep.

The Wizard

Ken Hensley, keyboardist, guitarist and songwriter for Uriah Heep in the '70s, left us on November 4.

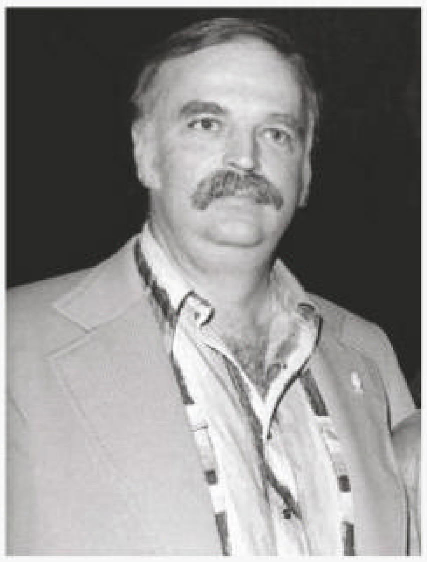
THERE WAS NEVER much doubt that Ken Hensley, the main songwriter, keyboard-player and early driving force behind Uriah Heep, who has died after a short illness in Alicante, Spain, would make it. Ken had been in a year or two above us at school in Stevenage when he joined our group in the mid-'60s, and his appetite for hard work, learning his craft and pushing on made him a driving force and natural leader.

He'd been born in south London on August 24, 1945, but the Hensleys moved to fast-growing Stevenage New Town. While at school, Ken was offered terms to turn professional with Luton Town FC, then in the top tier of the Football League, but thought he'd stick to his studies. Turned on to rock'n'roll by Elvis Presley, he'd already been in several local bands when he joined ours in the early mid-'60s and we swiftly morphed in style as he upgraded organ from Farfisa (beat group) to Hammond (soul band).

Then he was gone, speeding through the gears, first with the psych-prog of The Gods (Greg Lake, Mick Taylor), and next joining Toe Fat with Rebel Rousers' singer Cliff Bennett. In 1970 Hensley joined members of Spice to form Uriah Heep. Their third album, 1971's *Look At Yourself*, established their hard rock/heavy metal style, with follow-up *Demons And Wizards* (1972, Top 25 UK and US) followed in 1973 by *Uriah Heep Live* and *Sweet Freedom*, a UK Top 20 hit. Largely dismissed by the UK music press, they were nonetheless a consistent live draw and had big-selling albums here, in Europe and the US. While with Heep, Hensley also recorded solo albums *Proud Words On A Dusty Shelf* ('73) and *Eager To Please* ('75), but group tensions, some of which sprang from the dominance of his songwriting credits, saw him leave in 1980.

Hensley went on to play with US bands Blackfoot, W.A.S.P., Cinderella and others, record more solo albums, re-record Heep songs, play at conventions with former members, and publish 2007's biography Blood On The Highway, a title shared with that year's album. His last work, *My Book Of Answers*, is scheduled for release in February.

Geoff Brown



Bruce Swedien

Engineer supreme

BORN 1934

Born in Minneapolis, trained pianist and electrical engineering student Bruce Swedien first recorded musicians as a teenager at the Schmitt Music Company in his hometown, where he worked with Tommy Dorsey. Running his own studio at 19, in 1957 he moved to Chicago to work for RCA Victor and then, with recording pioneer Bill Putnam, Universal. As well as recording sessions by jazz greats including Duke Ellington, Count Basie and Sarah Vaughan – in 1962 he had his first Grammy nomination for his work on Frankie Valli & The 4 Seasons' Big Girls Don't Cry – Universal was also where he began his long association with Quincy Jones. After engineering The Chi-Lites, Jackie Wilson and others at Brunswick, Swedien reconnected with Jones on the soundtrack to 1977 musical The Wiz, followed by Michael Jackson's 1979 smash *The Wall*, 1983's mega-seller *Thriller*, 1987's *Bad* and, without Quincy, 1991's *Dangerous*. The engineer won three Grammys with Jackson, and two more for his work with Jones. He later hosted classes for audio engineers, penned several books about his studio experiences and listed Paul McCartney, Muddy Waters, Mick Jagger, George Benson, Donna Summer, Roberta Flack, Herbie Hancock, Barbra Streisand, Barry White and more on his studio resumé. Of his "dear brother-in-arms", Quincy wrote, "for more than 70 years I wouldn't even think about going into a recording session unless I knew Bruce was behind the board."

Clive Prior

Getty, Eyevine

Telling the gospel truth: Rance Allen at Wattstax, Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, August 20, 1972.

Billy Joe Shaver

The Outlaw Poet of Texas

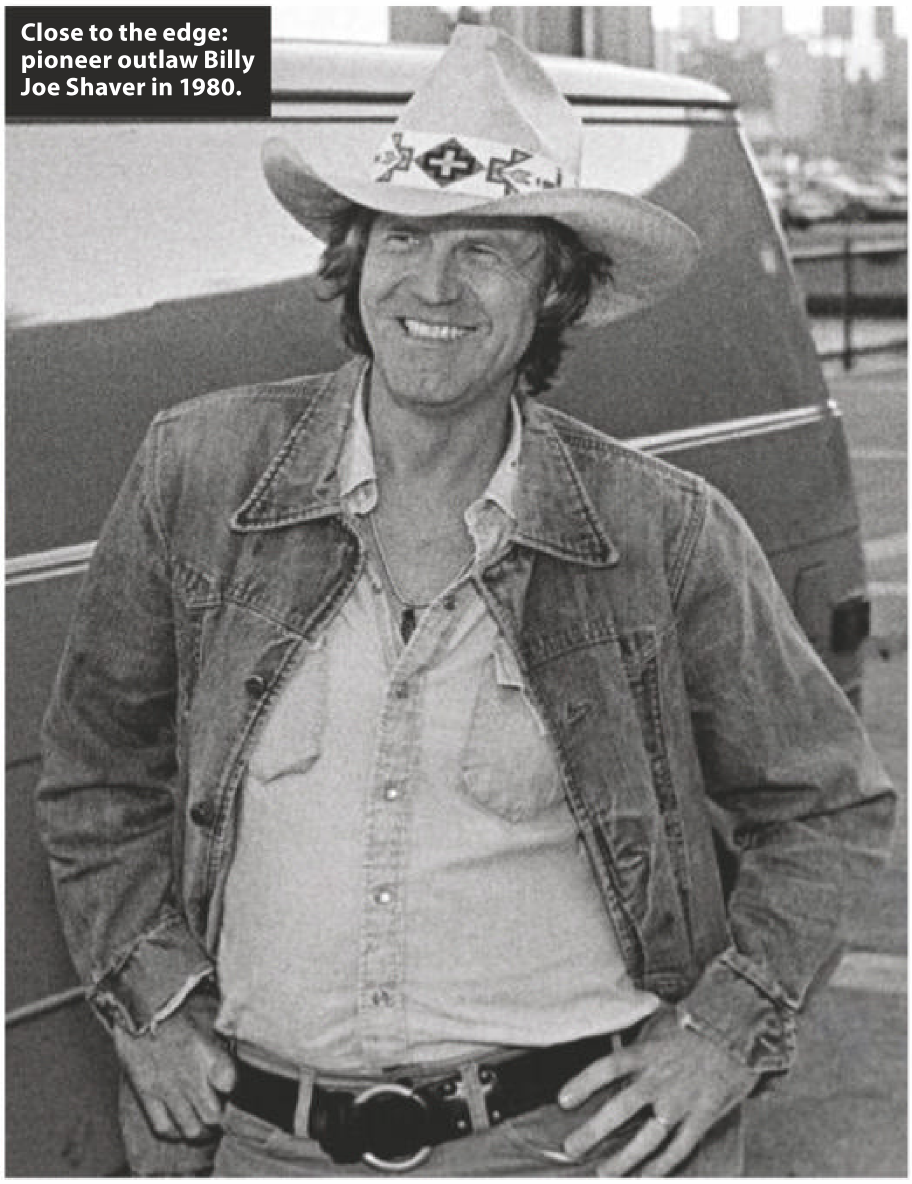
BORN 1939

"I've spent a lifetime making up my mind to be/More than the measure of what I thought others could see," sang Billy Joe Shaver in Old Five And Dimers Like Me, one of his legion of classic songs and the title of his 1973 album. Produced by Kris Kristofferson, it remains one of country music's mightiest debuts. He was the songwriter's songwriter, revered by Waylon Jennings (who recorded an album of his material called *Honky Tonk Heroes*) and Bob Dylan (who mentioned him in I Feel A Change Comin' On). Countless others performed his songs including Dylan, Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash and Willie Nelson.

Born in Corsicana, Texas, he was determined to be more than the measure of his dirt-poor youth. He picked cotton, worked in a mill (where he lost three fingers) and was a real rodeo cowboy. After Kristofferson recorded his anti-war Good Christian Soldier and Waylon's collection was released, Shaver's eloquence, unashamed hillbilly tropes and rough-and-tough truth-telling made him an instant legend, custom-made for the marketing of outlaw country music; his drug and booze intake was epic. But when he shot a "bully" in the face in 2007 during a bar fight, the reality proved more than PR hyperbole. (The victim was grazed and Shaver, pleading self-defence, was acquitted.)

His true grit was never commercially successful. "He is an achingly honest storyteller in a world that prefers something else," wrote friend Kinky Friedman. In 1993, he teamed up with son Eddy Shaver – a Stratocaster master who blended blinding-fast chicken-pickin' country and walloping hard rock – and simply dubbed Shaver, father and son unleashed the rousing *Tramp On Your Street*. Other collaborations followed until Eddy's overdose on New Year's Eve in 2000. Devastated, Billy Joe responded by playing that same night's already-booked gig. "I'm not proud of my misfortune," he explained. "I'm proud of my survival."

Michael Simmons



Close to the edge: pioneer outlaw Billy Joe Shaver in 1980.

Getty (2), Alamy, Shutterstock

> **"I'm not proud of my misfortune. I'm proud of my survival."**
> **BILLY JOE SHAVER**

Stan Kesler

Sun musician, producer, songwriter

BORN 1928

Born in Mississippi and musically adept from a young age, in the early '50s Stan Kesler was playing steel guitar for the Snearly Ranch Boys in Memphis, a shifting outfit whose ranks at times included Jerry Lee Lewis, Reggie Young, Bill Black, Paul Burlison, Barbara Pittman and future Stax Records co-founder Jim Stewart on fiddle. During his time in the band, Kesler co-wrote I'm Left, You're Right, She's Gone and I Forgot To Remember To Forget: a short hop away at Sam Phillips' Sun Studio, both songs would be recorded in 1955 by the young Elvis Presley. Becoming a regular session multi-instrumentalist and engineer at Sun, Kesler played with Jerry Lee, Carl Perkins and Roy Orbison. He later worked with James Carr at Goldwax, produced 1965 big-seller Woolly Bully for Sam The Sham And The Pharaohs, and put together formations of musicians, including the Memphis Boys and the Dixie Flyers. As a writer, his material was covered by Johnny Cash, Wanda Jackson and, again, Elvis (Kesler was especially proud of The King's 1969 version of If I'm A Fool (For Loving You)). In the '80s he formed the Sun Rhythm Section with Burlison, Sonny Burgess, DJ Fontana and others. He retired to Tennessee in the early '90s.

Clive Prior

Rance Allen

Stax's gospel great

BORN 1948

The power and range of Rance Allen's voice, stretching from a roaring baritone to delicate falsetto, was the prime instrument in The Rance Allen Group's energetic gospel hits of the '70s, be they self-written (Smile; Joy) or via soul hits reinterpreted as sanctified stormers –Gamble & Huff's There's Gonna Be A Showdown, for instance, or The Temptations' Just My Imagination (Just My Salvation). Born in Monroe, Michigan, Rance and his brothers Steve (bass) and Thomas (drums) formed the trio in 1969. Spotted at a talent show by gospel producer/DJ Dave Clark, they signed to Stax's Gospel Truth subsidiary in 1971. Their '72 debut album mixed Rance originals with the Memphis label's songbook. I Got To Be Myself was a first R&B hit and David Porter's Ain't No Need Of Crying followed in '75, but it was on the gospel charts that Allen's songs hit big. They sang at Wattstax in '72, and thereafter their use of rock and soul arrangements in gospel became much imitated. Since 1985, Allen had been a pastor at a church in his new base of Toledo, Ohio, where in 2011 he was made a bishop. He died on October 31 from complications after a medical procedure.

Geoff Brown

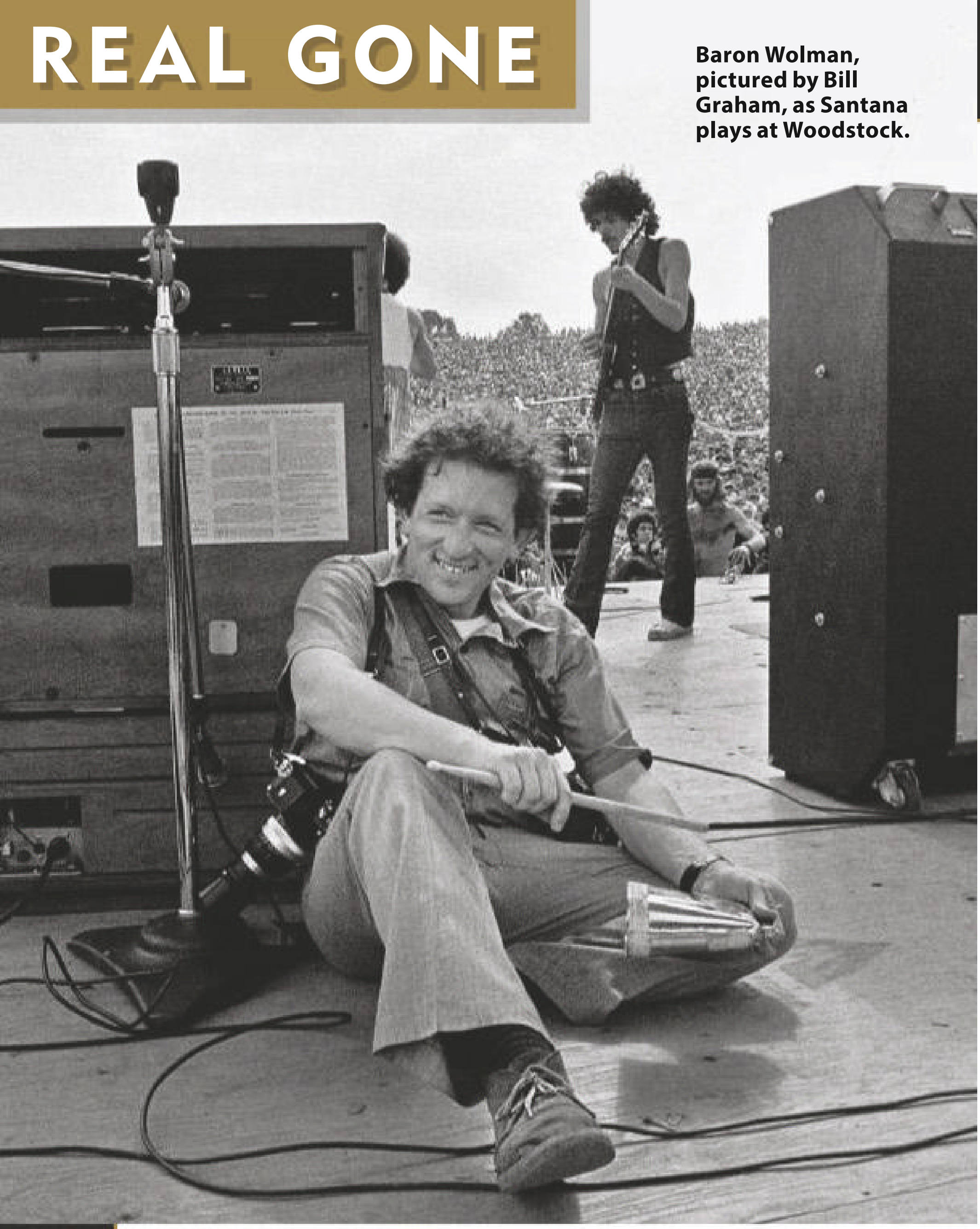
Len Barry

Singer, songwriter, blue-eyed soul

BORN 1942

The man born Len Borisoff co-founded Philly doo-woppers The Dovells in 1957, who scored the million-selling, Number 2 hit Bristol Stomp in 1961. Four more Top 40 hits followed, including Do The New Continental (as featured in John Waters' Hairspray movie in 1988) and the 1963 Number 3 You Can't Sit Down. Later the same year, as Len Barry, he embarked on a solo career, and reached UK Number 3 with 1-2-3 in 1965, and Number 10 with Like A Baby the following year. Both tracks continue to find favour on the Northern soul scene. Barry recorded his last solo album, *Ups And Downs*, for Buddah in 1972, and later moved into production and songwriting. His co-credits included the 1982 Fat Larry's Band hit Zoom, Love Town for Booker Newberry III in 1983, and Sylvester's 1986 dance hit Someone Like You. He was working on new music and a book project at the time of his death.

Ian Harrison



Baron Wolman, pictured by Bill Graham, as Santana plays at Woodstock.

Baron Wolman

Lensman royalty

BORN 1937

Baron Wolman's first paid photograph was, famously, a shot of the Berlin Wall being built in August 1961, for which he was paid $50 by his hometown paper, the Columbus Dispatch. The former philosophy student and German speaker was in the divided city working in counterintelligence for the US Army. Six years later, in San Francisco, he was also in the right place at the right time, when Jann Wenner asked him to join his new publishing venture, Rolling Stone.

Though he only stayed for three years, Wolman would amass an unrivalled portfolio of that crucial and glorious juncture in rock history. His inaugural job was photographing his Haight-Ashbury neighbours the Grateful Dead, defiant and wielding firearms after a pot bust in October 1967. A month later, his first live assignment was The Who at the Cow Palace. Vivid portraiture of Bob Dylan, Janis Joplin, Pink Floyd, The Rolling Stones, Zappa, Joan Baez, Jim Morrison, Ike & Tina Turner and many more would follow, including the famous open-mouthed image of Hendrix in full flight at the Fillmore West in February '68, and celebrated scenes of the Woodstock freaks at play. He initially worked for the magazine gratis, but, crucially, kept the rights to his black and white images.

Straight, professional and naturally discreet in a still-forming world of excess and money, he knew how to put his subjects at their ease and took full advantage of a pre-corporate milieu where a photographer had all the access he needed (literally) on-stage and off-. He also referred to the importance of being attuned to the flow of a live performance to capture the optimum moment.

He left the magazine in 1970, when, he said, business encroached and he could no longer take pictures the way he wanted to. He later founded style magazine Rags, moved into aerial, sports and motor racing photography, and curated his archive with style. He was a friend to MOJO, and we will miss him.

Ian Harrison

THEY ALSO SERVED

TURTLES RHYTHM GUITARIST **JIM TUCKER** (below, b.1946) met his bandmates at high school in Westchester, CA. Originally a surf group named **The Crossfires**, the renamed **Turtles** had a hit with Dylan's It Ain't Me Babe in 1965. Their 1967 pop single Happy Together knocked Penny Lane off the US Number 1 spot. The same year's She'd Rather Be With Me was also a hit in the UK. In London, they mixed with Jimi Hendrix, Graham Nash and The Beatles, though according to singer Howard Kaylan, John Lennon was so dismissive of The Turtles that Tucker hung up his guitar. Tucker insisted he had no regrets, later becoming a successful electrical contractor.

GUITARIST **TONY HOOPER** (b.1943) first met **Strawbs** founder Dave Cousins in primary school in Twickenham. A shared love of folk and American blues led to them playing in **The Strawberry Hill Boys**; becoming the Strawbs in 1967, they hit big with 1973's Part Of The Union. From there, the band's sound expanded from folk rock into prog extravagance, taking many detours along the way. Hooper had departed the group after 1972's *Grave New World*, though in 1983 he rejoined for another decade.

RHYTHM GUITARIST **LOU PALLO** (b.c.1934) first met **Les Paul** in 1963 in New Jersey, striking up a lasting musical bond. In 1984 they formed **The Les Paul Trio** with bassist Gary Mazzaroppi, and played weekly in New York, with such famous admirers as Jimmy Page, Paul McCartney, Billy Gibbons and Brian May in the audience and sometimes sitting in on-stage. After Paul passed away in 2009, Pallo continued their Monday night residency at the Iridium Jazz Club, and in 2012 released the tribute set *Thank You Les* with help from **Keith Richards**, **Slash**, **Nokie Edwards** and others. Also a firm supporter of musical education, he was affectionately known as "the man of a million chords".

PROMOTER **ERIC 'MONSTER MONSTER' HALL** (below, b.1947) later gained attention as a football 'super agent' and for offering his opinions on TV and radio. But in the early '70s he was a publicist for **Wizzard** and **ELO**, and, after joining EMI as head of promotions, **Queen** (Hall insisted Killer Queen was written about him, saying "Freddie fancied me like mad") and the **Sex Pistols**, whose appearance on Bill Grundy's Today programme he organised. He also dressed as a frog to dance when his childhood friend **Marc Bolan** performed New York City on Top Of The Pops in 1975, and also wore a **Womble** suit on the show.

LIGHT ENTERTAINER **DES O'CONNOR** (b.1932) was a fixture on UK TV for 50 years. He also recorded five Top 40 albums and had seven Top 20 singles, including the 1968 Number 1 I Pretend. In March 1958 he was on the bill when Buddy Holly And The Crickets toured the UK, and remembered an afternoon he and Holly spent trying out guitars in the music shops of Denmark Street.

PRODUCER/BASSIST **CHET 'JR' WHITE** (b.1980) was half of much-admired San Francisco duo **Girls** from 2007. The group released their 2009 debut, *Album* and 2011's *Father, Son, Holy Ghost*, an EP and a handful of singles before disbanding in 2012. After Girls broke up, White's credits included mixing **Cass McCombs**' 2013 album *Big Wheel And Others*, and producing **Tobias Jesso Jr**'s debut *Goon* in 2015.

Lynn Kellogg: as Hair's Sheila she believed in love.

ACTRESS AND SINGER **LYNN KELLOGG** (b.1943) was best known as **Sheila**, the debutante-turned-hippy student protester in the original 1968 Broadway production of Hair. The following year, Kellogg played Marcie in the **Elvis Presley** western Charro! Born in Appleton, Wisconsin, Kellogg was a devout Christian who remained active on the Christian contemporary music scene until her death.

DRUMMER **DAVE ROTCHELLE** (b.1952) apprenticed in mid-'70s pub rock with the **Count Bishops** and **The Rockets**, before driving Thamesbeat powerpopsters **The Pleasers** to the very edge of cracking it with a cover of The Who's The Kids Are Alright and TV guest spots on Cheggers Plays Pop and Tony Wilson's What's On. Thirty years as a photographer and trade union activist followed, and from the mid-'90s his indefatigable good cheer meant he was regularly elected to chair everything in sight at the NUJ. He had suffered from diabetes for several years. His old Pleasers bandmate Bo Benham remembered him as "one of the most straight-talking, intelligent, kindest individuals you could ever wish to meet."

Jenny Bulley, Phil Sutcliffe and Ian Harrison

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Leonard Cohen (drinking) with Marianne Ihlen (left, with pram) and friends on Hydra.

Getty

Various positions

Eyewitness accounts of the man and his myth make up a sprawling oral history. By **Victoria Segal**.

Leonard Cohen, Untold Stories: The Early Years

★★★★

Michael Posner

SIMON & SCHUSTER. **£25**

IN 1965, Leonard Cohen introduced fellow Canadian poet Phyllis Webb to pot before taking her out to dinner at a Chinese restaurant in Montreal. "He was chattering away," recalls Webb, "and said 'aren't I being brilliant?' And I said, 'No.'"

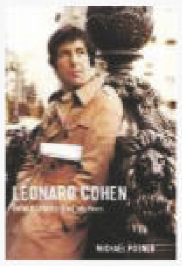
As the first instalment of Michael Posner's monumental three-volume oral history makes clear, "no" wasn't a word that Cohen was accustomed to hearing. The ladies' man who inhabits these pages is very much alive, whether "hypnotising" his family's maid to take off her clothes or instructing young student Madeleine Poulin to appear at midnight on the balcony of her room at Marianapolis College, an institution run by the Sisters Of The Congregation Of Notre-Dame. ("Boy, that's really stepping inside his own myth, isn't it?" remarks his friend Dennis Lee). Constructed from over 500 interviews with both inner-circle intimates and passing ships, the book is equally promiscuous, unable to turn down the promise of a quick recollection, no matter how shallow and meaningless.

Yet this writhing mass of eyewitness testimony isn't without its gratifications, vividly exposing just how much life Cohen lived before he decided to make the move from poet and novelist to singer-songwriter. Not every memory is capable of offering up his psyche on a silver platter, but as the anecdotes accumulate up until 1970, they build a compelling picture of the worlds around him – affluent Montreal suburbia, Canadian Jewish summer camps, beatnik coffeehouses, jetset bohemia – grounding his myth in solid context, enriching it with casual detail. Cohen partly turned to music after realising he would struggle to make a living as a poet; a friend's ostensibly mundane observation that Cohen would shun the cheaper, more distant airport parking for the closer option suddenly offers a sharp sliver of insight into his motives.

After a careful account of his childhood, from his background in "Jewish aristocracy" to his volatile relationship with his Russian mother, Masha, friends and acquaintances trace Cohen's steep trajectory away from potential futures as a solicitor (he lasted half a term at law school) or grandee of the family clothing firm. His poetry, says friend and artist Vera Frenkel, "awoke empathy. Poor man. The women lined up to comfort. He did that very well." In 1959, he headed to London, then on to the proto-hippy idyll of Hydra, the Greek island where he started his turbulent eight-year relationship with Marianne Ihlen. Cohen might be the central character – scrawling "I change I am the same" in gold on the whitewashed walls of his house during an acid trip, coming close to collapse as he writes his 1966 novel Beautiful Losers under blazing sun, nursed back to health by a housekeeper with nettle soup – but the milieu around him is equally febrile, the living easy, the morals equally so. "The '60s were dangerous times for relationships," says writer and long-time friend Aviva Layton, "and Greek Islands were quadruply dangerous." Even back in Montreal, recalls another girlfriend, it was "like a pyjama party. Everybody was doing everyone else."

There is an element of boho soap opera to Leonard Cohen, Untold Stories, the format allowing for wildly unfounded speculation – gossip over whether he ever spent time in a mental institution, for example. Some recount casual cruelties and romantic recklessness; others saw Cohen as a hero even before he'd written a word. Yet as with any good oral history, the stories and opinions slowly coalesce like pointillist dots, shifting into a complex portrait of a man stepping into his myth, becoming brilliant.

> **"The '60s were dangerous times for relationships."**
> AVIVA LAYTON



WHAT WE'VE LEARNT

- Cohen temporarily went blind in the middle of a Montreal street after taking too much opium with on-the-lam Scottish writer Alexander Trocchi.
- In 1966, he was considered as the presenter of a TV public affairs show; he turned down the chance to become Canada's Melvyn Bragg.
- Asked how he was so thin by his poet friend Henry Moscovitch in 1965, Cohen replied: "Henry, you'd be thin too if you lived on seaweed and amphetamines."

(R)evolution

★★★

Gary Numan
(With James Hogg)

CONSTABLE. £20

Do Numanoids dream of electric book sales? New memoir brings us up to date.

Gary Webb, born in 1958 in Hammersmith, sold out the London borough's storied Odeon 21 years later, stage-named Numan after a kitchen appliance shop. His seamstress Mum and spray-painter Dad presented their little dreamer with a DIY "control panel" studded with old dials ("I was a pilot, a ship's captain, an explorer"), while watching planes roar into a local airfield "like dragons". Medicated by a child psychologist for then-undiagnosed Asperger's, his adult writing style is scatty ("the single scraped to Number 198, I think"). Clinical standoffishness hampered public relations but nevertheless granted him consecutive glory years of elaborate, cash-haemorrhaging sci-fi stage sets and an early retirement in 1981 ("a catastrophic mistake"). On his uppers, Numan finds love with fan Gemma O'Neill, enjoys a Hello! magazine wedding and finds rediscovered cachet among the post-Nine Inch Nails crowd. His revered midlife status is a long, long way from being thrown out of a Kenny Everett Christmas Show recording by David Bowie.

Andrew Collins

Galactic Ramble

★★★★★

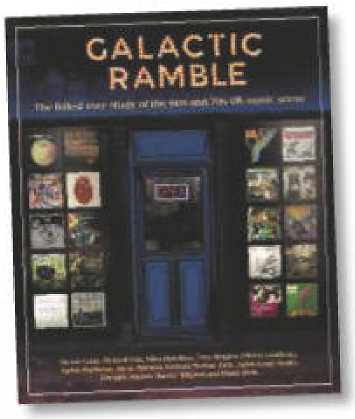
Edited By Richard Morton-Jack

GALACTICRAMBLE.COM. £60

Every notable UK pop, rock and jazz record released and reviewed between 1963-75?

A foolhardy enterprise is largely achieved in this huge (920 pages) and hugely enjoyable survey of the output of a very busy period between Please Please Me and the first glimmer of punk. Morton-Jack and his team of 11 cheerful obsessives compile clips of contemporary reviews, then add their own present-day assessments of every British album from Aardvark to Zyder, from cornerstones of the canon to the unlit crannies of British jazz, via every Ferris Wheel, Moonkyte and Skip Bifferty. The contemporary reviews are often fascinating (the British magazine Cream was brutal!) and there are hundreds of ads and promo flyers reproduced. The modern reviews are enthusiastic, honest summaries, unafraid to prod the odd sacred cow. It's like browsing a long-abandoned record shop with an extraordinary inventory and an amiably knowledgeable staff. Yes, you'll spot some omissions and anomalies, but if you're at all fascinated by this chunk of British musical history – and who reading this isn't? – you will not regret owning a copy.

Jim Irvin



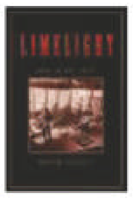
Limelight: Rush In The '80s

★★★

Martin Popoff

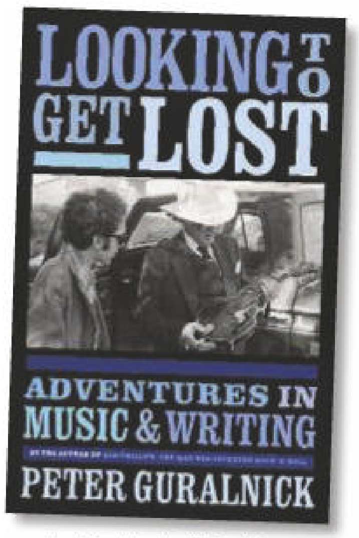
ECW PRESS. £23.99

Part two of Toronto scribe's career-long Rush biography.



The author of over 80 books on hard rock and heavy metal, Martin Popoff writes utilitarian prose that sometimes smacks of deadline. He's great on chronology and minutiae, though, hence his earlier employment as a researcher for Banger Films' rated documentary Rush: Beyond The Lighted Stage. This sequel to Anthem: Rush In The '70s reveals such unlikely Rush influences from Iceland's Björk to Nigeria's King Sunny Adé, and maps the band's '80s metamorphosis via detailed interviews about their embracing of new technologies, lyricist Neil Peart's switch to acute studies of the human condition, and the unique dynamic that kept the band together for five decades until Peart's death in 2020. The book's occasional dryness is offset by a fair degree of revelation. Nowhere else, surely, will you read about their near collaboration with UFO's Michael Schenker, nor about the 'Geddycorn', a mythical female creature who attends Rush concerts alone and sings all the lyrics.

James McNair



Looking To Get Lost: Adventures In Music & Writing

★★★★

Peter Guralnick

LITTLE BROWN. £20

First book in five years from biographer of Elvis Presley, Sam Phillips and Sam Cooke.

Searching Google Books for Peter Guralnick's latest tome, it was bemusing to find it filed under "Self-help". But if anything holds together this substantial collection of essays, commentary and memoir, it's the ongoing story of how blues changed Guralnick's life. He had planned to be a novelist. After discovering the blues at around age 15-16, he started writing about it "with one idea only: to tell people about this music that I thought was so great." He talks about it in terms of a calling, part scholar, part innocent. One engaging moment is his Q&A with Eric Clapton, who also fell into the blues at 15-16. Their "conversation about a shared obsession" is up there with anything found in a Nick Hornby novel. There is a piece on Tammy Wynette, but Looking To Get Lost is mostly a boys' adventures-in-music book. Not as cohesive as his epic biographies, nevertheless there is plenty worth reading here.

Sylvie Simmons

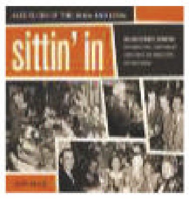
Sittin' In: Jazz Clubs Of The 1940s And 1950s

★★★★

Jeff Gold

HARPER DESIGN. £30

Unseen photos and new interviews from a time when jazz was *the* hippest thing.



You could spend hours just staring at the performance photos here and dreaming of time travel: Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk, Charles Mingus and Roy Haynes jamming it up in New York in 1953; Dizzy Gillespie leading his big band at the Savoy. But mostly what you get here is regular folks clustered tightly at tables – in Chicago, Atlantic City, San Francisco and several other American jazz capitals – drink glasses in hand, wide grins on their faces, out for a memorable night digging the music of the moment. Historian Jeff Gold has gathered dozens of such photos, alongside gig advertisements, handbills, tour programmes and the like, and tied the tantalising visuals to new interviews (Sonny Rollins, Quincy Jones) and fascinating capsule bios of the places where it all happened. Who knew, for example, that the Ertegun brothers, Ahmet and Nesuhi, before they launched Atlantic Records, hosted racially integrated jazz parties at Washington DC's Turkish Embassy? The musicians, fans and club owners probably weren't aware of it, but they were making history night after night.

Jeff Tamarkin

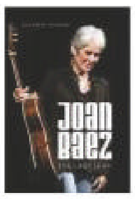
Joan Baez: The Last Leaf

★★★★★

Elizabeth Thomson

PALAZZO EDITIONS. £12

An inspiring and definitive biog of The Queen of Folk.



Joan Baez's unwavering dedication encouraged humanity's angels with inseparable artistry and activism. As Bob Dylan noted, Baez was blessed with a soprano "like a siren off some Greek Island". A folk music star from the age of 19, she was dubbed Queen of Folk in the '60s and was crucial in helping Dylan start his royal ascendency. A favourite of Martin Luther King, she sang at 1963's March on Washington, civil rights being a defining passion. She was there for historic outbreaks of peace (Woodstock '69) and war (Sarajevo '93), retiring from the road in 2019, aged 78. Author Thomson is a sharp listener, her evocative musical descriptions singing along with her subject's songs. As a young girl she was inspired by Baez, and with decades of personal access has written the definitive biography.

Michael Simmons

Catwoman Joan Baez, siren of folk.

Getty

Looking for the grand wazoo: (main) Frank Zappa with engineer Kerry McNabb in a scene from Zappa; (top) Frank in later years; (above) on-stage with The Mothers Of Invention.

Mothers pride

Alex Winter-directed profile of this most singular artist and social provocateur. By **David Fricke**.

Zappa

★★★★★

MAGNOLIA PICTURES. C/ST

“MY DESIRES are simple,” Frank Zappa declares in this long-awaited feature-length portrait of the American composer, bandleader, guitarist and social provocateur. “All I want to do is get a good performance, a good recording of everything I ever wrote, so I can hear it. And if anybody else wants to hear it, that’s great too.” There is a pause. “Sounds easy,” he adds with the hint of a smile between that signature moustache and soul patch, “but it’s really hard to do.”

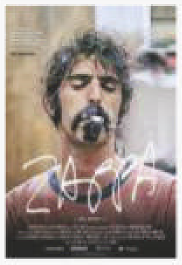
Directed by Alex Winter and five years in the making (with the help of a Kickstarter campaign that set a record for a documentary), Zappa is a dazzling and gripping account of what its star achieved in that mission before his death in 1993, aged 52. The whirlwind of rare concert footage, previously unseen home movies and punctuative commentary – the best of it, inevitably, from Zappa’s many candid and lethally funny interviews – also reveals what that iron drive cost him, with no regrets, in success, bandmates and even family life. “In the five years I was with Frank, he shook my hand once and said, ‘Good job,’” recalls saxophonist Bunk Gardner, a member of the storied, ’60s version of The Mothers Of Invention.

Yet Zappa could write with startling, romantic grace, as percussionist Ruth Underwood proves when she performs the winding melody of Oh No from 1970’s *Weasels Ripped My Flesh* on piano. “Even in the ugliest chord he ever wrote,” says Zappa’s ’80s guitarist Steve Vai, “there is a ray of hope.”

Zappa was a natural contrarian. Born in Baltimore to parents who were “opposed” to music, as he puts it drily, the teenager reacted by caring about nothing else after the family moved to southern California in 1952: falling for the French avant-garde composer Edgard Varèse; joining a racially mixed R&B band; opening his own Studio Z in Cucamonga, living on the premises without hot water on a diet of peanut butter and instant mashed potatoes. Alex Winter made Zappa with the approval of the Zappa Family Trust and open access to the artist’s legendary tape-and-film vault, which means extraordinary you-are-there moments such as the Mothers at New York’s Garrick Theatre during their legendary 1967 residency and the actual photo session for the cross-dressing-*Sgt. Pepper* spoof cover of *We’re Only In It For The Money*.

Winter also had final cut, not the Trust. We learn that Zappa’s devotion to his wife Gail (they married in 1967) did not hinder his hurtful, first-hand research of the groupie phenomenon, and the 1982 novelty hit Valley Girl with eldest daughter Moon Unit resulted from a note she slipped under her workaholic dad’s studio door, looking for some attention. Frank was “a slave to his inner ear,” Vai says, and that is evident from the film’s first minutes – Zappa barely paying attention to a film crew, notating a score as he talks about his childhood – to his last days, after the 1991 announcement of his prostate cancer. In a TV interview shortly before his death, Zappa is asked about the effect of the disease on his composing and recording. “On a good day, I can go from 9.30 to 6.30,” he replies; bearded, tired and working to the end.

> “In the five years I was with Frank, he shook my hand once.”
> **BUNK GARDNER**



WHAT WE’VE LEARNT

- As a child, Zappa suffered from severe asthma and, as he says, “almost checked out a few times.” His father moved the family to California “for the air.” Despite his condition, Frank was a lifelong smoker.
- When MGM Records baulked at the *Sgt. Pepper*-parody cover for *We’re Only In It For The Money*, Zappa phoned Paul McCartney in Britain, asking him to assure the label that The Beatles would not sue. McCartney declined.
- In 1969, Zappa abruptly disbanded the original Mothers, explaining that after taking $400 out of his bank account to go on tour, he returned $10,000 in debt. It was “not a lifestyle I wish to continue.”

RAPHAEL CALLAGHAN

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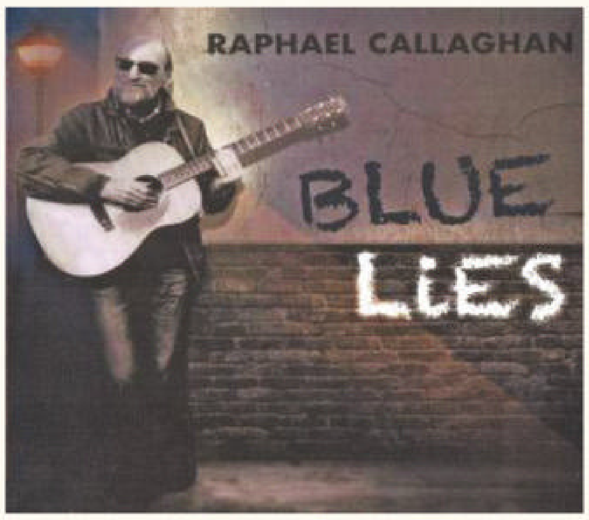

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BREW REPUBLIC

To and 'fro: Keith Jarrett at the keys and in the moment in 1975; (right) *The Köln Concert* LP; (below) another angle on spontaneous composition.

KEITH JARRETT
THE KÖLN CONCERT

JANUARY 1975

...Keith Jarrett plays The Köln Concert

JANUARY 24 The Cologne Opera House was an imposing, modernist space, and usually played host to multi-voiced, formal epics by Wagner, Verdi, Puccini and other made men of libretto and coloratura. On this chilly winter night, however, the casually attired jazz heads of Westphalia witnessed a legendary solo improvisation by piano titan Keith Jarrett. Yet it was probably a miracle it happened at all.

Born in Pennsylvania in 1945, Jarrett had been a classical piano prodigy with perfect pitch. Then, as a teen, jazz took him too. Graduating from Berklee to the Village Vanguard, he'd gone on to play with Art Blakey, Charles Lloyd and Miles Davis. A marquee name from 1967, he led groups on albums for Atlantic, Columbia and, from 1973, Impulse!, and from 1971 also recorded solo piano works for Munich indie ECM. It was as a lone keyboardist that Jarrett, accompanied by ECM founder Manfred Eicher, was in Europe in January 1975.

Seventeen-year-old promoter Vera Brandes, the precocious force behind the New Jazz In Cologne concert series, contacted ECM live agent Thomas Stöwsand and booked the Opera House from 11pm this Friday night. When word got out that Jarrett was playing, the four Mark tickets sold fast.

Yet the event was fraught with obstacles. Jarrett had played the Salle des Spectacles in Épalinges, a suburb of Lausanne, Switzerland the day before his Cologne engagement, and had made the sleepless 400-mile journey through the night by car. He was also suffering from back pain. On arrival, another cosmic joke was played on him. When he'd accepted the gig, he specified an Imperial Bösendorfer, a near-10-foot, eight-octave grand piano. The Opera House assured Brandes they had one to hand. When Jarrett and Eicher arrived at the dimly illuminated hall earlier that day, recalled the promoter, they each played a few notes on the instrument provided. "After a long silence, Manfred came to me," she told the BBC in 2011, "and said, 'If you don't get another piano, Keith can't play tonight.'"

Due to a mix-up, Jarrett had been provided with a Bösendorfer baby grand used for rehearsals – one that wasn't in tune, with pedals that stuck and some keys that didn't work. Another Imperial was sourced, but a nameless piano tuner forbade the potentially catastrophic plan to wheel the replacement instrument across town in rainy conditions. Instead, he set to work making the baby grand playable. "The piano tuner saved our lives," said Brandes, who asked Jarrett to commit to the gig as he sat in a car heading back to his hotel. He agreed. Then, the Italian restaurant they went to before the show messed up his order, and he didn't even get to eat.

The decision having been taken to record the concert, ECM engineer Martin Wieland was present with a mobile studio and two Neumann U 67 microphones. Jarrett recalled in 2011 how this plan hardened his resolve. He told jazz scribe Don Heckman he gave Eicher a raised fist salute on his way to the stage, adding, "I was forced to play in what was – at

> "The piano tuner saved our lives."
> **VERA BRANDES**

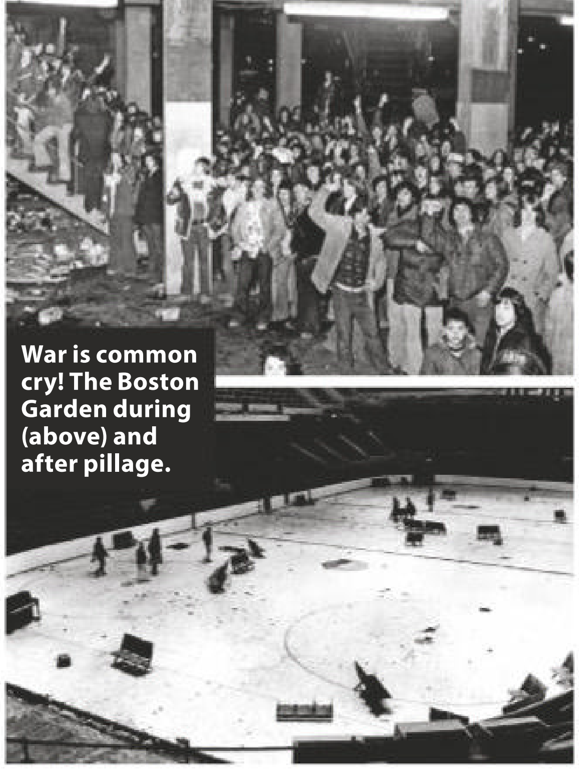
the time – a new way. Somehow I felt I had to bring out whatever qualities this instrument had… my sense was, 'I have to do this. I'm doing it. I don't care what the fuck the piano sounds like.'"

Tired, hungry, wearing a back brace, and alone with a suboptimal instrument and a 1,300-strong crowd, he abandoned preconceived ideas, trusted himself and dug as deep as any musician has. Made up of four parts over an hour, this pianistic journey into a transcendent beyond builds on shifting melodies and repeated patterns, punctuated by groans and vocalisations as he stood and sat as the mood took him. Locating the place where jazz, folk, blues and contemporary classical merge into a kind of ecstatic connection, it was released as *The Köln Concert* that November. To date, it has sold, ECM estimate, three and a half million copies.

The next day Jarrett was gone, off to play in Baden. In the course of the following decades, and over 100 albums with his trio, quartets and alone, he never stopped exploring his art. Yet two strokes in 2018 have left him unable to play. Speaking to the New York Times in October, he revealed he could not even do so in his dreams.

In his 1991 preface to *The Köln Concert*'s transcription, Jarrett explained his long-standing reluctance to set the music down, writing, "this was a totally improvised concert on a certain night and should go as quickly as it comes." If only it were that simple – for 46 years on, *The Köln Concert* is still here, still making every moment new.

Ian Harrison



War is common cry! The Boston Garden during (above) and after pillage.

Zeppelin fans riot

JANUARY 7 **In the early hours, an estimated 2,700 Led Zeppelin fans run amok at the Boston Garden Arena. They'd been queuing overnight to buy the $7.50 tickets for a Zep show on February 4 and had been allowed into the venue lobby when the night grew chilly. The throng broke into the hall proper around midnight, however, seizing 300 cases of beer, setting fire to seats and vandalising a piano. By 6am all 9,000 tickets are sold. Outraged, mayor Kevin H White cancels the show and bans the group from Boston for five years. In 2019, Jimmy Page reveals, "I was blissfully unaware of any of these shenanigans, but the mayor was, by all accounts, a Rolling Stones fan!"**

I'M HERE FOR THOSE NAUGHTY RHYTHMS
DR. FEELGOOD
CHILLI WILLI KOKOMO
UK TOUR

Doin' it right: Feelgoods Wilko Johnson (left) and Lee Brilleaux attend to business.

DR. FEELGOOD GET NAUGHTY

JANUARY 31 Prog groups across the nation feel a sudden chill as Dr. Feelgood release their tough and fast pub rocking debut *Down By The Jetty*. Recorded live in mono with Vic Maile, it features their storming debut single Roxette. On January 21 the band recorded their first John Peel session, while on January 28, the three-band, six-week Naughty Rhythms tour – a VFM package billed as "Non Stop Real Music Coming Your Way At 1000 Smiles An Hour" – begins at Watford Town Hall. MOJO's very own Geoff Brown reviews the opening date for Melody Maker, reporting that Chilli Willi And The Red Hot Peppers open and Kokomo headline, with a torrid Feelgoods set in the middle.

Advertising Archives, Getty (6), Steve Emberton/Camera Press

ALSO ON!

MOTT, NOT

4 The NME reports that **Ian Hunter** (above) has left **Mott The Hoople**. He comments, "Sorry man, I *really* have nothing to say." In April he releases his solo debut *Ian Hunter*, assisted by ex-Mott guitar **Mick Ronson**.

FABS FLAP

9 **The Beatles**' partnership is formally dissolved in the High Court. This month at New York's Electric Lady Studios, **John Lennon** will co-write and sing on **David Bowie**'s Fame.

SQUIRES' IRE

18 **Dorothy Squires**, star of the '50s whose last hit was a paint-stripping version of My Way in 1970, announces she's to quit the record business and write a "sensational" book. It never appears.

KEEF, PERKY

19 **Keith Richards** plays guitar and sings on a recording of Get Off My Cloud by **Alexis Korner**, at CBS Studios in Fitzrovia. Also present: **Steve Marriott, Nicky Hopkins** and **Peter Frampton**.

POPS DROPS

30 Presented by **Tony Blackburn**, tonight's Top Of The Pops features **Pilot**'s January, **Queen**'s Now I'm Here, and Northern soul leapers spinning to **Wigan's Chosen Few**'s Footsee, among others.

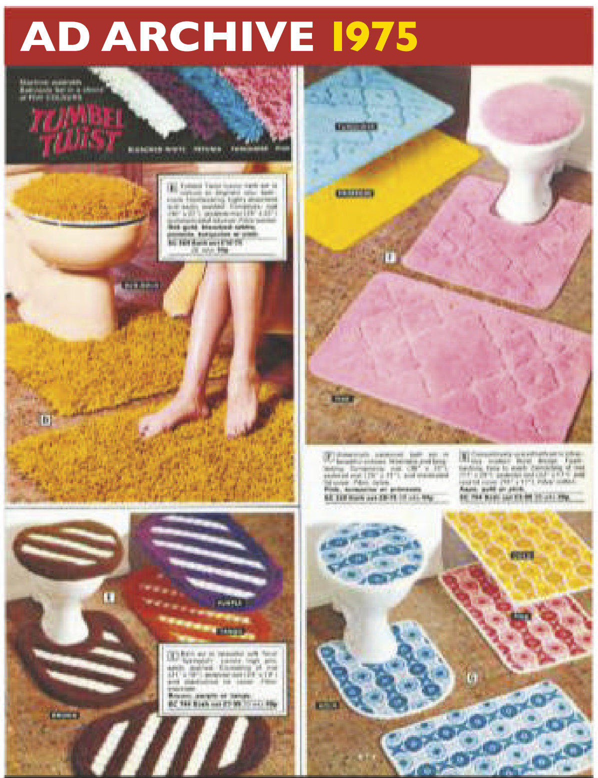
TOP TEN

REGGAE SINGLES. BLACK MUSIC MAGAZINE JANUARY

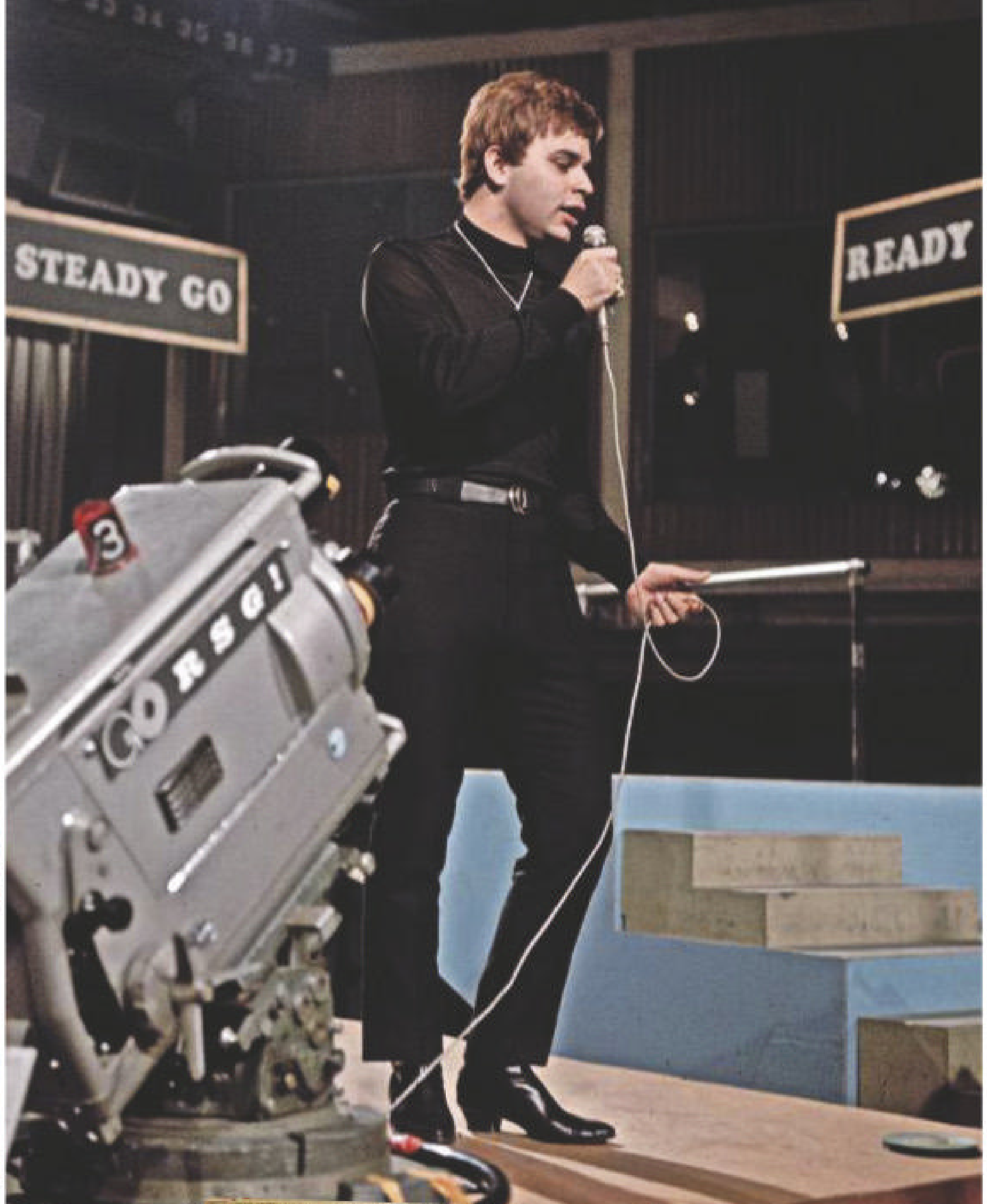
1. **CURLY LOCKS** JUNIOR BYLES (DIP)
2. **IRIE FEELING** RUPIE EDWARDS (CACTUS)
3. **I'M IN LOVE** HORTENSE ELLIS (BIMBO)
4. **HURTS SO GOOD** SUSAN CADOGAN (DIP)
5. **IN MY HEART THERE IS A PLACE** GINGER WILLIAMS (PARADISE)
6. **TOGETHER** JIMMY LONDON (HARRY J)
7. **SO JAH SEH/ NATTY DREAD** BOB MARLEY AND THE WAILERS (ISLAND)
8. **DON'T GO** GREGORY ISAACS (ATTACK)
9. **THIS MONDAY MORNING FEELING** TITO SIMON (HORSE)
10. **SUMMERTIME** PAT KELLY (FIGHT)

I am a masochist: Susan Cadogan is at Number 4.

AD ARCHIVE 1975



For all insanitary shared flats – retina-scorching synthetic-carpet toilet accessories will look great even when layered in dust and stray hairs.



Who Saw The Future (On Wax)?

Stand by! As **Fred Dellar** socks it to ya with rude words, outrageous scams and Strawberry Windmills.

I was listening to Cliff Richard and The Shadows' 1965 version of Jagger & Richards' Blue Turns To Grey, and I was struck by how like an '80s indie band the guitar intro seemed. The guitar break in Cream's Badge also sounds like it's from a different decade. Do you have any other good examples of sonic details that arrived too soon?

Gary Llewelyn, via e-mail

Fred Says: One brilliant 'Eh?' moment is in Orange Juice's 1982 hit Rip It Up, which used the unmistakable blip-bloppy noise of the Roland 303 Bass Line synth, which found fame later in the decade as the essence of acid house. The infernal tones of Black Sabbath's first album in 1970, meanwhile, uncannily predicted doom metal, while there are all kinds of blues and rock'n'roll records with fabulously distorted guitars that garage punks would swoon over and psychedelic bands would sell their (electric) grandmother for. We should also mention The Eligibles' Car Trouble, which used backwards tapes all the way back in 1959, and the 1956 single The Flying Saucer by Bill Buchanan and Dickie Goodman, which brazenly purloined and edited together bits of songs by Elvis Presley, Little Richard, The Penguins and more in a manner to shame The Justified Ancients Of Mu Mu's infamous *1987 What The Fuck's Going On?* LP. Amazingly, the offending single reached Number 3. But enough from us – what are *your* favourite 'avant-la-lettre' sonic signatures?

WAS LOU LEWD?

Why was the Lou Christie single Rhapsody In The Rain banned?

Chaz Butler, via e-mail

Fred Says: The song was written by Christie and clairvoyant Twyla Herbert, whose vocal group The Delicates provided back-up. But the lyrics proved too hot for many radio stations to handle. Lines such as "We were makin' out in the rain" and "In this car, we went too far" upset many religious organisations. Years later Christie told Goldmine magazine, "I had priests and nuns calling to complain. Even Time magazine did an article on it saying I was corrupting the youth." Such was the uproar that Christie was forced to return to the recording studio and record a new version. Buoyed by all the publicity, however, the rewrite quickly hoisted itself into America's Top 20.

DID MICHEL LEGRAND SUPPLANT THE BEATLES?

The first (1968) version of The Thomas Crown Affair movie was shown again on TV recently. Is it true that the soundtrack originally included some tracks by The Beatles?

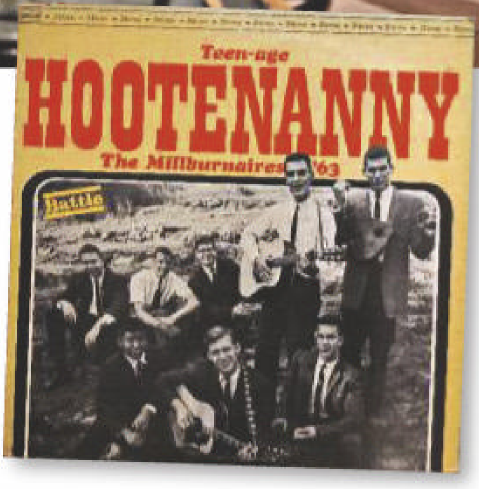
John Leader, via e-mail

Fred Says: Apparently, Strawberry Fields Forever was employed as a stopgap track during the glider scene until Michel Legrand linked with Marilyn and Alan Bergman to write The Windmills Of Your Mind, which was also used over the opening credits. Though Noel Harrison provided the vocals in the film, Andy Williams was first choice for the gig, but turned it down.

DID DYLAN RIP OFF A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT?

Is it true that a high school student not only wrote Blowin' In The Wind but also recorded it before Bob Dylan?

Lesley Moore, via e-mail



Ripping yarns: (clockwise from far left), Zeke Manyika (left) and Edwyn Collins of Orange Juice pump up the bass *years* early; saucy Lou Christie on RSG!; Lorre Wyatt's Dylan-borrowing LP from '63; Noel Harrison, whirling silently in space.

Fred Says: Lorre Wyatt, a New Jersey student, initially claimed that he wrote Blowin' In The Wind and performed the song during 1962. In April 1963 his folk band The Millburnaires recorded an album, on which Wyatt received a composer's credit for Blowin' In The Wind (Dylan did not release his recording until August 1963). According to Dylanologist Clinton Heylin, the truth is that Broadside magazine published Blowin' In The Wind in its May 1962 edition, where Wyatt saw it, performed it, declared ownership and then said he sold it to Dylan for a thousand bucks. Wyatt explained himself in 1974, saying it was all a juvenile gag that got out of hand, saying, "I'd begun to make Pinocchio look like he had a pug nose." He did make good as a folk singer though, and in 2012 he released *A More Perfect Union* with his pal Pete Seeger, which included contributions from Bruce Springsteen, Steve Earle, Emmylou Harris and others.

ZOUNDS! – NO TOWNES

Re Phil Weedon's question about Townes Van Zandt's 1987 gig in Woolwich (MOJO 321). I was the manager/programmer at the venue, which was run and owned by the London Borough of Greenwich (rather than Terry Malone as stated). Sorry, I have to say that I don't recall any filming. We did have some set video cameras that beamed images of the stage into the bar area, maybe that was what Phil was thinking of?

Steve Forster, Norwich

CONTACT FRED

To get your questions answered, conundrums clarified or help untangle a puzzle, e-mail:

Fred Dellar and his assistants direct at fred.dellar@bauermedia.co.uk

Avalon, Getty (2)

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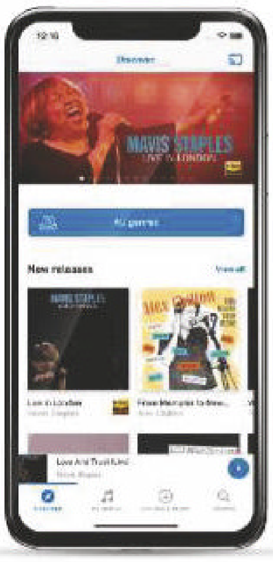
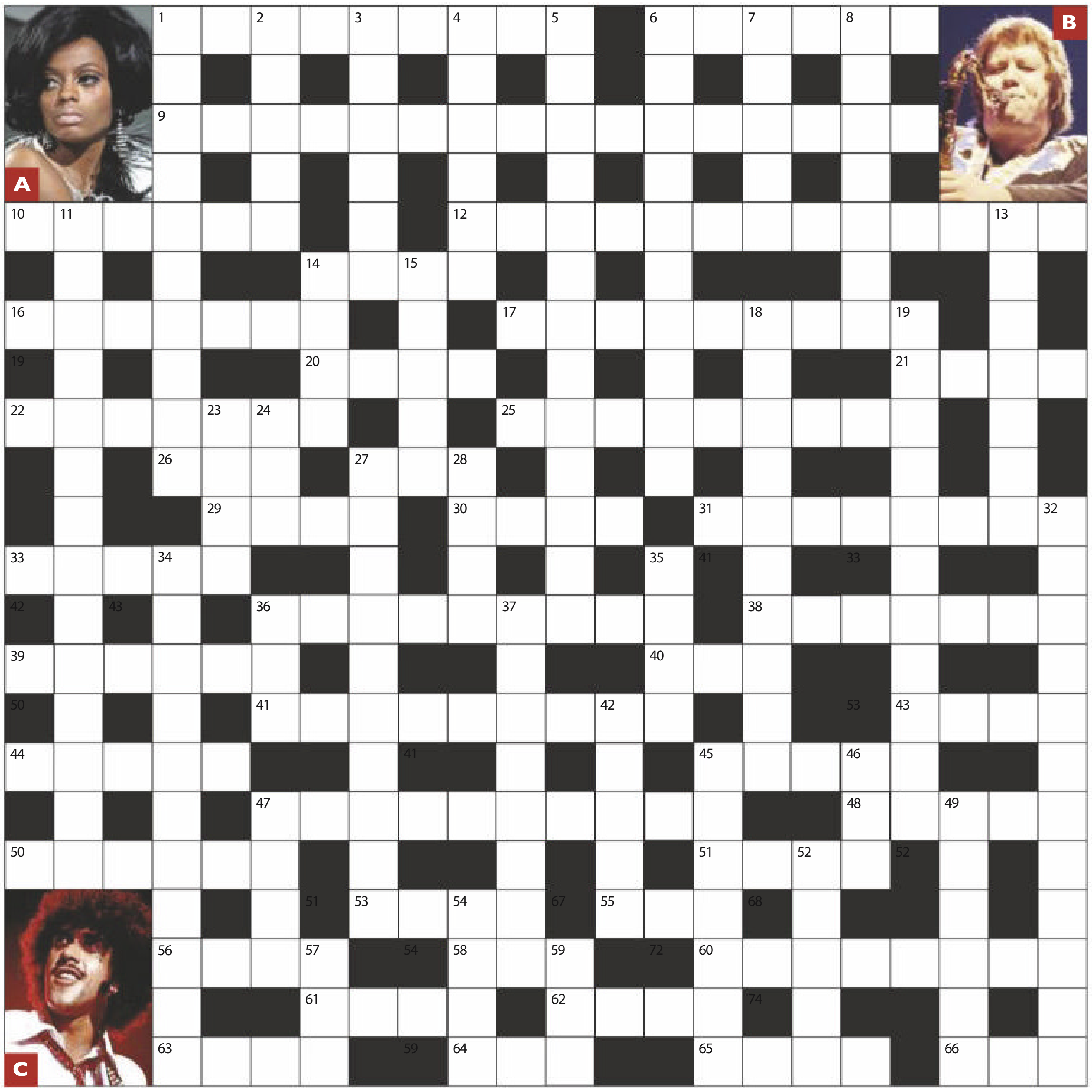


Roon also boasts an innovative recommendation system. The CXN also has built-in support for Qobuz and Roon, so you can start listening immediately!

For a chance to win all three, fill in Northampton Jug Stomper Fred Dellar's crossword, and send a scan of it to mojo@bauermedia.co.uk making sure to type CROSSWORD 327 in the subject line. Entries without that subject line will not be considered. Please include your home address, e-mail and phone number.

The closing date for entries is **February 2**. For the rules of the quiz, see www.mojo4music.com

qobuz roon



Getty (3)

ANSWERS

MOJO 325

Across: 1 Them, 4 Slang, 7 Coma, 9 Hop, 10 Ten, 11 Jerk, 13 Op, 14 Qwest, 16 Meme, 17 Ka, 19 Red, 21 Celia Cruz, 23 Id, 24 SS, 26 Sad, 27 Lice, 28 Anyone, 29 Opus, 31 Eyes, 32 Yak, 34 Brit, 37 Atomic Jones, 38 Egypt, 39 Pew, 40 and 73a Romi Mori, 41 Hag, 44 Natty Cultural Dread, 49 Beta, 50 Ales, 51 LA, 53 On, 54 Blue, 55 Canty, 58 Ozit, 59 Yello, 60 Hungry For Stink, 62 Sire, 63 Ry, 64 Boi, 66 Jandek, 68 Islands, 70 Roag, 71 Raze, 73 Mori, 74 Popol Vuh, 75 Bash, 76 Deck

Down: 1 Thor, 2 Hopes, 3 EP, 4 Steely, 5 Leslie, 6 Antics, 7 Crez, 8 OK, 11 Jerry Dammers, 12 Emu, 15 WC, 16 MC, 17 King Rocker, 18 Ady, 20 Danzig, 22 AE, 24 Spragga Benz, 25 Suit, 30 Stompin At The Savoy, 33 King, 35 Ayshea, 36 Yagga, 40 Rats, 42 Zulu, 43 Ella, 45 Texans, 46 Cally, 47 Leeroy, 48 Dan, 49 Boots Riley, 52 Smokie, 55 Chicago, 56 Ty, 57 Yep, 61 Fry, 65 Fresh, 66 James, 67 Kojak, 69 Duos, 71 Rub, 72 A-ha

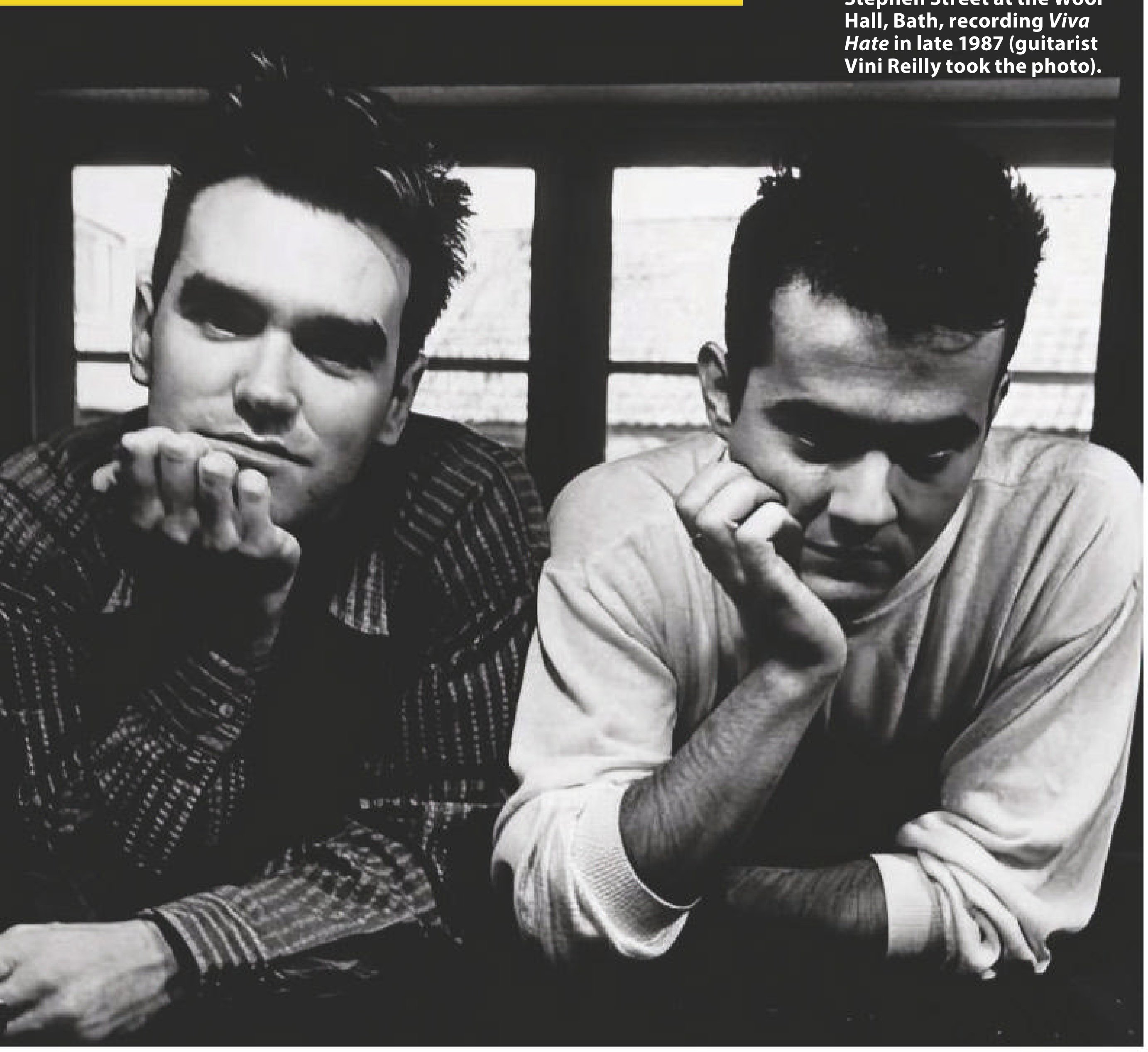
Winners: Paul Speed of **Tetney, Lincolnshire** wins a fine set of limited edition Grado Hemp headphones.

ACROSS

1 See photoclue A (5,4)
6 Shove like a Salt-N-Pepa hit (4,2)
9 Leonard Cohen introduced Hallelujah on this album (7,9)
10 Ray Parker Jr's funky band (6)
12 U2's tribute to Billie Holiday (5,2,6)
14 System Of A ---- (4)
16 Music genre originating in Trinidad (7)
17 It was Tricky's 13th studio album (9)
20 Dexys' R&B inspiration (4)
21 ---- And The Sniffers (4)
22 Camden Town's sultans of ska (7)
25 It was a 1966 hit for Sonny & Cher (6,3)
26 Elton's song (not autobiographical) (3)
27 A taxi for Hi-Di-Ho Calloway (3)
29 It's a Davy Graham instrumental (4)
30 Guthrie, took us to Alice's Restaurant (4)
31 "Every day I get in the queue" (The Who) (5,3)
33 As made by Living Colour in 1993? (5)
36 Jazz-rock band of Jon Hiseman (9)
38 *After Bathing At* ------- (Jefferson Airplane album) (7)
39 Love's second album (2,4)
40 British blues guitarist Brown (3)
41 See photoclue B (5,4)
43 It's a Royksopp chart single (4)
44 Kenneth, director of Scorpio Rising (5)
45 Could be Cooper, could be Coltrane (5)
47 ------ ---- And Laughing (6-4)
48 ----- *Eclipticalis* (John Cage album) (5)
50 Residents album that includes The Walrus Hunt (6)
51 Parsons of Project fame (4)
53 Jazz multi-instrumentalist Roland (4)
55 --- And Dave (3)
56 Suzanne, took you to Tom's Diner (4)
58 A studio or a French band (3)
60 It's an Eva Cassidy album (8)
61 Dr Bob's modular synth (4)
62 Roger, songwriter and lead singer with Blue Mink (4)
63 Award-winning Glasgow/Edinburgh folkers (4)
64 Little, and she did The Locomotion (3)
65 Vehicle hitmakers, The ---- Of March (4)
66 Richard, session pianist who was a member of Stuff (3)

DOWN

1 His suit was big, it made his head look small (5,5)
2 Brazilian percussionist Moreira (5)
3 Harlem's iconic theatre (6)
4 Scottish traditional band whose albums include *Dove Across The Water* (6)
5 This Willie Nelson album was mainly produced by Arif Mardin (7,6)
6 See photoclue C (4,6)
7 Label launched by Jake Riviera and Dave Robinson (5)
8 Trumpet player, formed Nucleus (3,4)
11 Their debut album was *Dirk Wears White Sox* (4,3,3,4)
13 Hot Band leader Harris (7)
14 *Rain* ---- (Tom Waits album) (4)
15 Rockabilly queen Jackson (5)
18 He sings with The Tubes (3,7)
19 Location for those rock Preachers (5,6)
23 Could be Walter, could be Rusty (4)
24 --- House, Mississippi bluesman (3)
27 Her autobiography is titled What's It All About? (5,5)
28 Stringed instrument usually part of the rhythm section (4)
32 We Are Family, they said (6,6)
34 Monkees hit penned by Neil Diamond (2,1,8)
35 Blues-rock guitarist Garrett (4)
36 Initially they were Clive's Original Band (1.1.1.)
37 A Taste Of Honey's Japanese offering (8)
42 *Get Yer* ----- *Out* (Rolling Stones) (2-3)
45 This acid house producer released N-R-G (7)
46 Their albums include *Ege Bamyasi and Tago Mago* (3)
47 ---- For A Seagull (Joni Mitchell) (4)
49 *Angel With A* ------ (k.d. lang album) (6)
52 Jazz singer Ross, linked with Lambert and Hendricks (5)
54 ---- Hard (Frankie Goes To Hollywood) (4)
57 R&B voice Shola, LPs include *Surreal* (3)
59 Label that released Elvis's Heartbreak Hotel (1.1.1.)



I don't mind if you forget me: Morrissey (left) and Stephen Street at the Wool Hall, Bath, recording *Viva Hate* in late 1987 (guitarist Vini Reilly took the photo).

Stephen Street and Morrissey

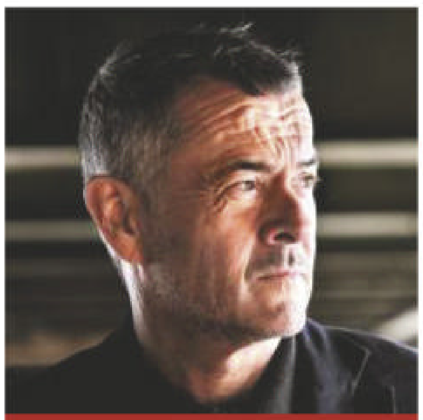
They united after **The Smiths** split, but old Moz habits meant the ride was not long.

HELLO MARCH 1984

I did my first session with The Smiths, as an engineer, at the Fallout Shelter in Fulham, for [single] Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now. It was the start of a long relationship.

Everything was hunky dory when we were making [1987 swansong] *Strangeways, Here We Come*, but, of course, then Johnny [Marr] left. I knew there wasn't much in the can to use as B-sides for the singles, so I just sent Morrissey a cassette with some ideas, saying, "Forgive me for being presumptuous, if there's anything here that could be useful…" I'd got married that August and had a two- or three-day honeymoon in Paris, and when I got back there was a postcard from Morrissey saying he wanted to do a solo record with me.

That October we were in the studio [The Wool Hall, Bath] recording *Viva Hate*, and it was the most pressure you could ever feel. I was playing bass, bits of rhythm guitar, recording it as an engineer, as a producer, trying to teach Vini [Reilly, guitar] and Andrew [Paresi, drums] the songs, trying to guess what key Morrissey wants it in… I learned a lot of man-management skills working with him. You're trying to second-guess all the time, but even after we did *Viva Hate*, I still thought they'd see the error of their ways, and The Smiths would reform.



"'He was ever so nervous… he thought you might hit him.'"

STEPHEN STREET

GOODBYE JANUARY 1989

I carried on sending songs to him over summer '88, and he said would I be happy working with [ex-Smiths] Mike [Joyce, drums] and Andy [Rourke, bass]? And also Craig Gannon [guitar]. Which was a bit of a bolt from the blue. So we did the Last Of The Famous International Playboys and Interesting Drug singles. It was quite productive, but it was a bit strange me telling Mike and Andy what to do, especially Mike. I felt slightly as if my position was challenged.

That happened really majorly when Morrissey decided to do this gig in Wolverhampton in December ['88]. I said to him, "I'd love to play guitar, if you're gonna do songs we've done." There's a certain look, and silence, you get that tells you it isn't gonna happen. I was disappointed, just there sitting in the mobile, recording it, outside.

While all this was going on, I'd spent the whole year trying to get my production royalty agreed, and it got to the point where my solicitor wrote to his. Finally, I remember receiving, through the post, the bottom half of one of my solicitor's letters, ripped in half, and Morrissey had scribbled, 'Not Enough Is Enough, But Enough Is Too Much.' And that was it, that was my P45.

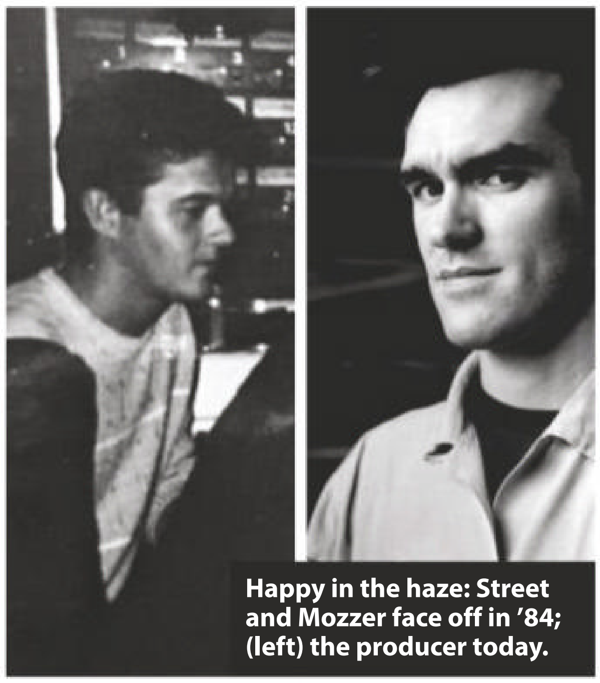
I'd sent him the idea for [1989 single] Ouija Board, Ouija Board after Wolverhampton, and he invited me to Hook End Manor where it was recorded, with Clive Langer and Alan Winstanley. I walked in and felt awful. They're looking at me thinking, "What the fuck is he doing here?" It was kind of like Morrissey saying, "This is what I'm doing now, and I'm doing it without you." I remember being very upset.

Much later, 10 years ago, I wrote him a letter saying, "I'm thinking of you, life's marching on, it'd be lovely to catch up." There was a communication from someone at Warners, who said, "Is this a legal letter, do we need to get a solicitor involved?" They wouldn't even open it. I said, "No, it's a friendly letter." So he comes back to me, "Stephen, shocked but nicely surprised to hear from you, blah blah, I'll be at Claridge's next week." He turned up with two other people. He went to the toilet, and this woman that was looking after him said, "Oh he was ever so nervous about meeting you, that's why we're here, he thought you might hit him." I couldn't believe that's how they thought things might go. I think the other guy was Jake, the ex-boxer. But when I disagreed with his [2012] remaster of *Viva Hate*, and said he'd butchered the record, I was incommunicado again. Having said that, a couple of years ago he did write to me. I think he was recuperating in a hospital or clinic in Switzerland, and he just wanted to say hi, and it was lovely.

Personally, I think he should get out of America and come back to the UK, and make some records here. There's never been a singer or lyricist like him. I honestly wish the guy well, I really do.

As told to Ian Harrison

Stephen Street is a member of Bradford, whose new album Bright Hours is out in February 2021.



Happy in the haze: Street and Mozzer face off in '84; (left) the producer today.

Vini Reilly, Getty, Courtesy Stephen Street, Fernando Martins

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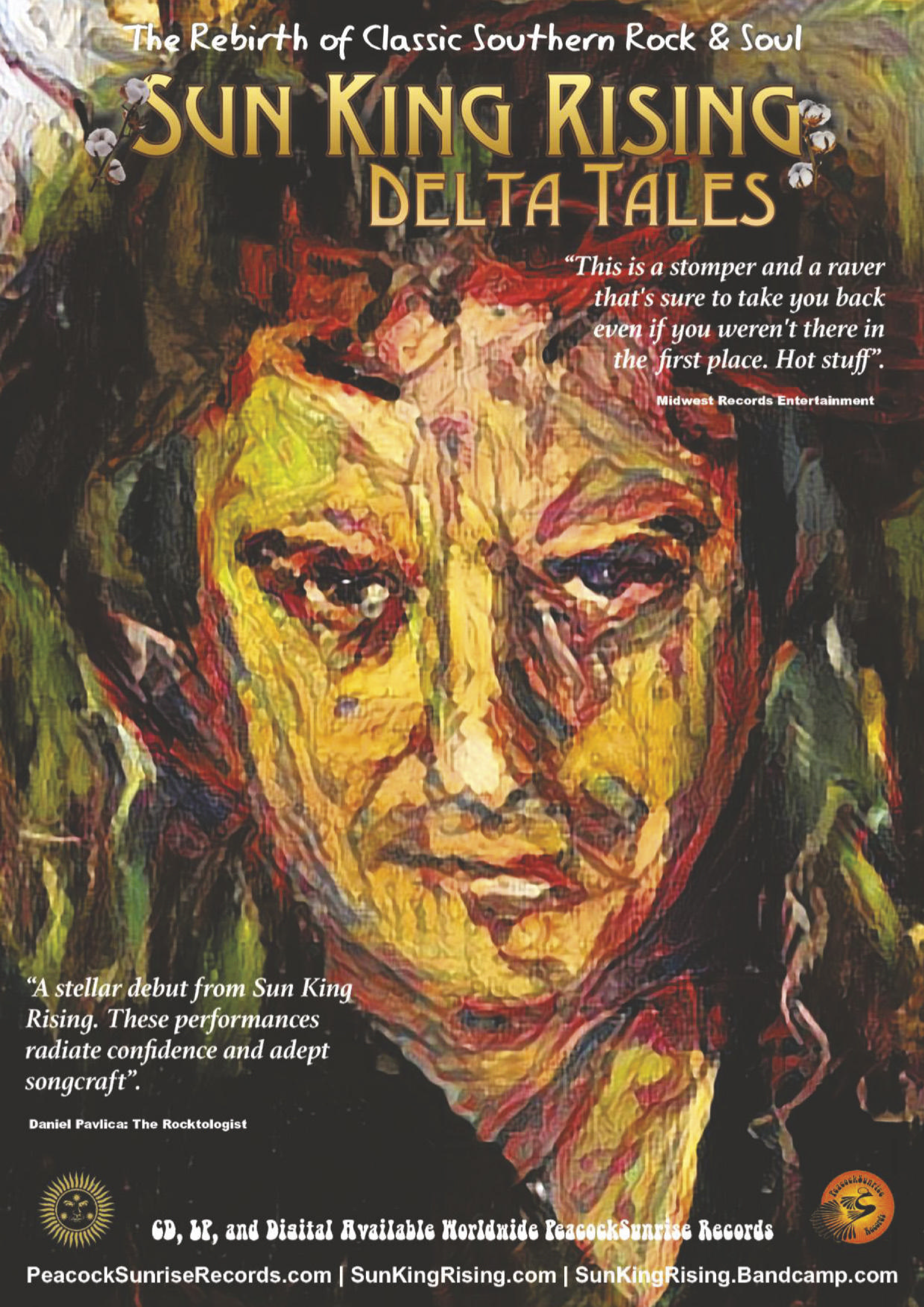

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